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SELECTIONS FROM GIBBON'S DECLINE  
AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE



SELECTIONS FROM  
Gibbon's Decline and Fall  
of the Roman Empire

BY  
H. G. RAWLINSON,  
Indian Education Service

AND  
W. N. U. DUNLOP,  
Indian Civil Service

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAPS*

BOOK I  
THE ETERNAL CITY

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and became a popular member of the literary circles of the day. A writer of the time compares and contrasts him with his great contemporary. "The learned Gibbon" says George Colman, "was a curious counterbalance to the learned (may I not say the less learned) Johnson. Their manners and tastes, both in writing and conversation, were as different as their habiliments. On the day I first sat down with Johnson in his rusty-brown suit and his black worsted stockings, Gibbon was placed opposite to me in a suit of flowered velvet with a bag and sword. Each had his measured phraseology, and Johnson's famous parallel between Dryden and Pope might be loosely parodied in reference to himself and Gibbon. Johnson's style was grand, and Gibbon's elegant; the stateliness of the former was sometimes pedantic, and the latter was occasionally finical. Johnson marched to kettledrums and trumpets, Gibbon moved to flutes and hautboys. Johnson hewed passages through the Alps, while Gibbon levelled walks through parks and gardens.<sup>1</sup> . . . The great historian was light and playful, suiting his matter to the capacity of the boy: but it was done *more suo*—still his mannerism prevailed, still he tapped his snuff-box, still he smirked and smiled, and rounded his periods with the same air of good-breeding, as if he were conversing with men. His mouth, mellifluous as Plato's, was a round hole nearly in the centre of his visage."

His person looked so funnily obese  
As if a Pagod, growing large as man,  
Had rashly wandered off its chimney-piece,  
To visit a Chinese upon a fan.  
Such his exterior, curious 'twixt to scan!  
And oft he rapped his snuff-box, cocked his snout  
And ere his polished periods he began,  
Bent forwards stretching his forefinger out  
And talked in phrase as round as he was roundabout.

Meanwhile, he was working hard at his great task, devoting his mornings from seven o'clock to study, and the evenings

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to Society. Slowly the great scheme unrolled itself in his mind. "At the outset all was dark and doubtful; even the title of the work, the true æra of the decline and fall of the empire, the limits of the Introduction, the division of the chapters, and the order of the narrative, and I was often tempted to cast away the labour of seven years. The style of an author should be the image of his mind, but the choice and command of language is the fruit of exercise. Many experiments were made before I could hit the middle tone between a dull chronicle and a rhetorical declamation; three times did I compare the first chapter, twice the second and third, before I was tolerably satisfied with their effect." The last two chapters required three successive revisals, and the first volume occupied three years in all.

It was during this period that Gibbon (chiefly, one fears, for mercenary reasons,) was induced to enter Parliament. One morning, at half-past seven, "as he was destroying an army of barbarians," a messenger arrived with an invitation to him to sit for the borough of Liskeard. Gibbon regarded politics with cynical indifference, and never opened his mouth in the House. Even the rebellion of the American Colonies left him unmoved. "The great speakers filled him with despair, the bad ones with terror." He accepted from Lord North a post on the Board of Trade, and this sinecure enabled him to work in comfort. In 1776, the first volume came out. Its success was immediate. "The first impression was exhausted in a few days; a second and third edition were scarcely adequate to the demand; the bookseller's property was twice invaded by the virates of Dublin; the book was on every table, and almost on every toilette." Robertson, Walpole, and his old friends the Neckers, hastened to offer their congratulations. Paris was as enthusiastic as London. "Whether I consider the dignity of your style," wrote Hume, "the depth of your matter or the extensiveness of your learning, I must regard the work as equally the object of esteem."

In 1781 two more *partos* appeared, and two years later, Gibbon left London to stay with his friend Deyverdun at Lausanne in order to finish his task in unbroken calm amid the vine-trellises and orange trees of that delectable spot. For four years he never went ten miles out of Lausanne. His industry was prodigious. The fifth volume was completed in twenty-one months, and the sixth in a year. And so the great work, the greatest, perhaps, ever undertaken by a single writer, was finished. "On the day, or rather the night, of the 27th of June, 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve I wrote the last lines of the last page in a summerhouse in my garden. After laying down my pen, I took several turns in a *berceau*, or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and perhaps the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that whatsoever might be the future fate of my history, the life of the historian must be short and precarious." He went straight to London with his precious burden, and on May 8th, 1788, the last three volumes saw the light. His life-work was finished.

Gibbon's closing years were clouded by the loss of many old and valued friends. In 1789 Deyverdun was taken. He still, however, enjoyed the society, at Lausanne, of the Neckers and of Lord and Lady Sheffield. In 1793, news of the death of Lady Sheffield caused him to return to England, and he himself died of dropsy at Sheffield place on January 7th, 1794, in the fifty-sixth year of his age.

## II

THE *Decline and Fall* is the greatest historical work in the English language, and one of the greatest in all literature. Two features differentiate it from other works of the same kind, the vastness of the design, and the masterly manner in which it is coordinated. The story of the decline of the Roman Empire is the most stupendous catastrophe in history. The Empire under Augustus and his immediate successors included almost the entire civilized world, and gave to its millions of subjects blessings never enjoyed before,—a uniform legal code, equality of treatment, freedom of action and belief, and safety of person and property. Inside this fabric grew up another organization, despised and neglected at first, the Christian Church, forming a state within a state, which, when the huge structure collapsed under the combined influences of internal decay and external pressure, tamed its rude conquerors and moulded them into fresh nations and kingdoms. It is the story of the death and rebirth, not merely of an Empire, but of civilization itself.

And Gibbon handles the theme in a manner worthy of itself. It did not come to him all at once. Originally he intended to confine himself to the Eternal City; by insensible degrees he was led to include, first Constantinople, then Persia, and finally the Mahommedan world. Yet he manipulates this huge and unwieldy mass of material with almost epic power. The vast panorama unfolds itself before the reader's eyes, perfectly proportioned and arranged. It marches on, someone has remarked, with the steady and measured tramp of the Roman legion; or, to vary the simile, it has been compared to "a magnificent Roman aqueduct, spanning over the chasm which separates the ancient from the modern world." Another point which impresses us is the extraordinary degree in which Gibbon combines literary excellence and grasp of his subject with accuracy of detail. Few subjects become



obsolete so quickly as history, yet modern research, with all its probing into original sources, has merely served to confirm the accuracy in all substantial points of the *Decline and Fall*. In his regard, not merely for literary authorities, but for coins, inscriptions and archæological evidence, Gibbon was a century before his time. And it must be remembered that he had no predecessor in his work, and his authorities were not historians like Thucydides and Livy and Tacitus, or orators like Demosthenes and Cicero, but the barbarous and almost unreadable jargon of Ammianus Macellinus and the debased Greek of the Byzantine age. To extract from this dross the gold of his matchless narrative was in itself a work of genius.

Perhaps the most serious charge that has been brought against Gibbon is that of *superficiality*. He sees only the outside of things, it has been said. His Roman Empire consists only of Emperors and generals and great statesmen; the everyday life of the people, and the social and economic conditions, receive but little attention. Yet they played a decisive part in the great catastrophe which it is his business to chronicle. In the same way, he speaks of the overthrow of the Empire by the barbarians, forgetting that the Empire had already been "barbarized" for centuries, and that the real struggle was between two rival parties of barbarians, one within the Empire and one without it. Gibbon is, moreover, responsible for the popular but erroneous view of the Byzantine Empire as frivolous and degenerate, whereas it was in reality a bulwark of civilization, and the guardian of the ancient classical learning until the West became sufficiently civilized to receive it and profit by it.

Another charge brought against Gibbon is his anti-Christian bias,—“sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer,” in the words of Byron. Gibbon's attitude towards Christianity is that of the eighteenth century deist, and he has the typical eighteenth century distrust of enthusiasm and enthusiasts, Julian and Mahomet no less than the

Christian martyrs and hermits. The fall of the Empire is in his mind indissolubly linked with "the triumph of barbarism and religion." "Europe was overrun by barbarians, and Asia by monks." He refuses to recognize that the death of the old order was the birth of the new, and that Christianity merely hastened the process. The difference between Gibbon and Milman is that the former is always looking backward and the latter forward. Gibbon ascribes the rise of Christianity, or rather, attempts to explain it away, on purely natural grounds, and his own view is scarcely concealed in his statement that "the various modes of worship that prevailed in the Roman world were considered by the people as equally true, by the philosophers as equally false, and the magistrates as equally useful." His own creed was doubtless that of his hero Genghis Khan, "whose first and only article of faith was the existence of One God, the author of all good, Who fills by His presence the Heavens and the Earth which He has created by His power." Gibbon's dislike of what he considers to be fanaticism led, no doubt, to such violations of good taste as his callous remark about "the annual consumption of one hundred and fifty martyrs" in the Neronian persecution, which provoked Porson's vicious retort that "Gibbon's humanity never sleeps save when women are being ravished or Christians violated." On the other hand, Gibbon never speaks with disrespect of the Founder of Christianity or His teaching. His famous discussion of the Incarnation in the forty-seventh chapter is a model of theological argument, and earned from no less an authority than Cardinal Newman the opinion that Gibbon is "the only Church historian worthy of the name who has written in English."

The merits of Gibbon's style have been the object of much controversy, tinged, it is to be feared, by some of the theological and political odium aroused by his work. With his stately, Latinized periods, he could scarcely hope to be a *persona grata* with the new Romantic School, and

Lamb, with quite unwonted bitterness, classes the *Decline and Fall* among the *liblia abiblia*, and speaks contemptuously of "cursed Gibbonian fine writing." His aim was to acquire a "middle tone between a dull chronicle and a rhetorical declamation," and he only achieved his object by patient effort. "It has always been my practice to cast a long paragraph in a single mould, to try it in my ear, to deposit it in my memory, but to suspend the action of my pen, till I had given the last polish to my work." The result is admirably adapted to the end in view. Gibbon's style has exactly the massive grandeur, the stateliness and restraint which his subject demands. Indeed, his chief defect is that his grandeur tends to become monotonous: he speaks with the same solemnity of a Byzantine Emperor and a barbarian chieftain. He lacks the lighter touch. He is at his best in his vivid descriptive narratives,—Rome in the fifth century, Constantinople under Justinian, Arabia at the time of the birth of Mahomet, the rise and fall of Zenobia, the death of Julian. As a typical example of his style, let us select for analysis a sentence like the following:—

"The early Christian was encompassed with infernal snares in every convivial entertainment, as often as his friends, invoking the hospitable deities, poured out libations to each other's happiness. When the bride, struggling with well-affected reluctance, was forced in hymeneal pomp over the threshold of her new habitation, or when the sad procession of the dead slowly moved towards the funeral pile, the Christian on these interesting occasions was compelled to desert the persons who were dearest to him, rather than contract the guilt inherent in these impious ceremonies."

Here nearly all the leading characteristics of Gibbon's style are exemplified, his irony, his sparkling wit, his Latinisms, and above all, what Professor Saintsbury calls "the peculiar roll of sentence, conducted throughout with a wave-like movement, and ending with a sound so arranged

as to echo over the interval of sense and breadth till the next is well on its way."

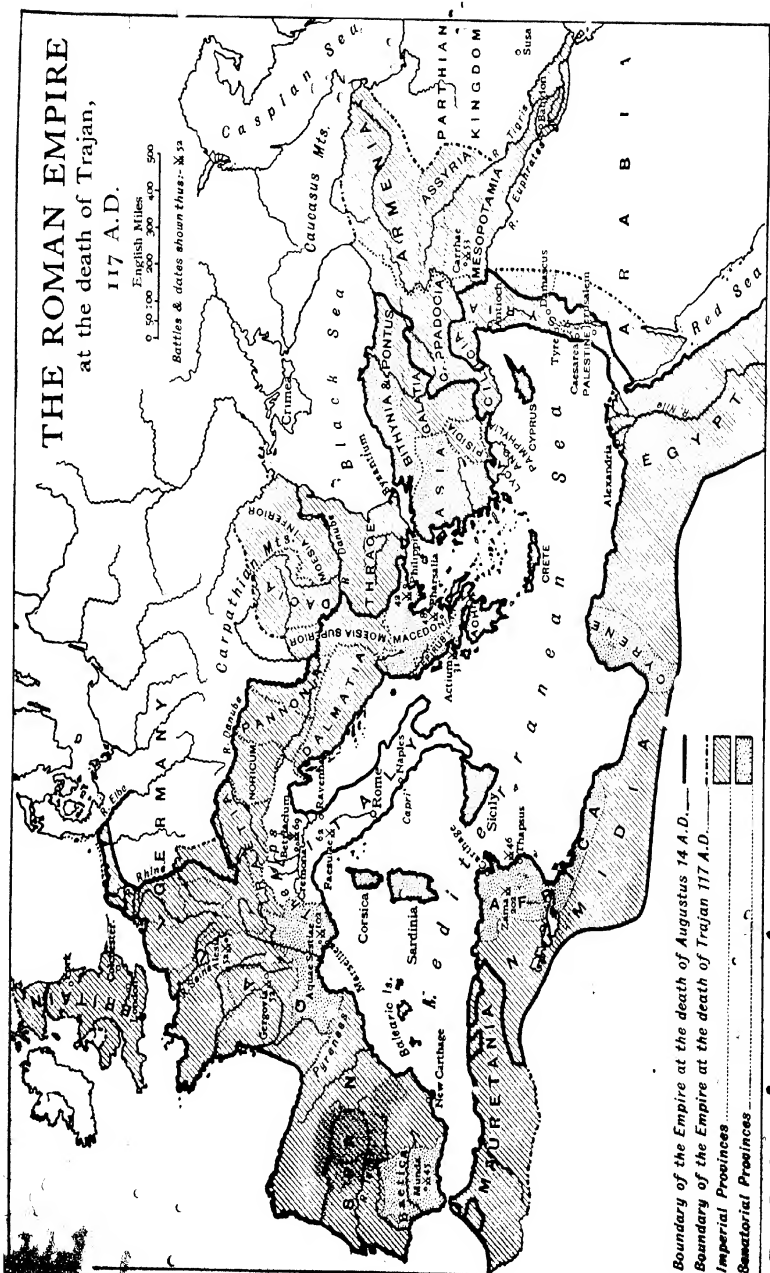
"That Gibbon should ever be replaced," said Freeman, "seems impossible. That wonderful man monopolized, so to speak, the historical genius and the historical learning of a whole generation, and has left little of either for his contemporaries. . . . Whatever else is read, Gibbon must be read too."

*BOOK I*  
*THE ETERNAL CITY*

## 1117 A. D.

A vertical number line with tick marks at 0, 50, 100, 200, 300, 400, and 500.

Battles & dates shown thus:- X 52



**Boundary of the Empire at the death of Trajan 117 A.D.**

### Senatorial Provinces

From George's "H

From Grant's "History of Florida."

## CHAPTER I

### ROME UNDER THE ANTONINES

(A.D. 96—180)

[INTRODUCTION.—The world has never known a nobler line of rulers than the five good Emperors, Nerva (96—98), Trajan (98—117), Hadrian (117—138), Antoninus Pius (138—161), and greatest of all, Marcus Aurelius (161—180). Gibbon estimates that in the history of the world, this was the period during which the human race was most happy and prosperous. The Emperors happily combined *Imperium* and *Libertas*. The Pax Romana prevailed from Britain to the Euphrates. Culture and education were widely diffused and means of communication were almost perfect. Yet it was only an autumn summer: the old hardy Roman character was being undermined by peace and prosperity: the army was daily becoming more turbulent: and ominous signs shewed that trouble was brewing among the semi-barbarous tribes upon the borders of the vast Empire.]

It is not alone by the rapidity or extent of conquest that we should estimate the greatness of Rome. The sovereign of the Russian deserts commands a larger portion of the globe. In the seventh summer after his passage of the Hellespont, Alexander erected the Macedonian trophies on the banks of the Hyphasis. Within less than a century, the irresistible Zingis, and the Mogul princes of his race, spread their cruel devastations and transient empire from the sea of China to the confines of Egypt and Germany. But the firm edifice of Roman power was raised and preserved by the wisdom of ages. The obedient provinces of Trajan and the Antonines were united by laws and adorned by arts. They might occasionally suffer from the partial abuse of delegated authority; but the general principle of government was wise, simple, and beneficent. They enjoyed the religion of their ancestors, whilst in civil honours and advantages they

were exalted, by just degrees, to an equality with their conquerors.

I. The policy of the emperors and the senate, as far as it concerned religion, was happily seconded by the reflections of the enlightened, and by the habits of the superstitious, part of their subjects. The various modes of worship which prevailed in the Roman world were all considered by the people as equally true ; by the philosopher as equally false ; and by the magistrate as equally useful. And thus toleration produced not only mutual indulgence, but even religious concord.

The superstition of the people was not embittered by any mixture of theological rancour ; nor was it confined by the chains of any speculative system. The devout polytheist, though fondly attached to his national rites, admitted with implicit faith the different religions of the earth. Fear, gratitude, and curiosity, a dream or an omen, a singular disorder, or a distant journey, perpetually disposed him to multiply the articles of his belief, and to enlarge the list of his protectors. The thin texture of the pagan mythology was interwoven with various but not discordant materials. As soon as it was allowed that sages and heroes, who had lived or who had died for the benefit of their country, were exalted to a state of power and immortality, it was universally confessed that they deserved, if not the adoration, at least the reverence of all mankind. The deities of a thousand groves and a thousand streams possessed in peace their local and respective influence ; nor could the Roman who deprecated the wrath of the Tiber deride the Egyptian who presented his offering to the beneficent genius of the Nile. The visible powers of Nature, the planets, and the elements, were the same throughout the universe. The invisible governors of the moral world were inevitably cast in a similar mould of fiction and allegory. Every virtue, and even vice, acquired its divine representative ; every art and profession its patron, whose attributes in the most distant ages and countries were uniformly derived from the character



of their peculiar votaries. A republic of gods of such opposite tempers and interests required, in every system, the moderating hand of a supreme magistrate, who, by the progress of knowledge and of flattery, was gradually invested with the sublime perfections of an Eternal Parent and an Omnipotent Monarch. Such was the mild spirit of antiquity that the nations were less attentive to the difference than to the resemblance of their religious worship. The Greek, the Roman, and the Barbarian, as they met before their respective altars, easily persuaded themselves that, under various names and with various ceremonies, they adored the same deities. The elegant mythology of Homer gave a beautiful and almost a regular form to the polytheism of the ancient world.

The philosophers of Greece deduced their morals from the nature of man rather than from that of God. They meditated, however, on the Divine Nature as a very curious and important speculation, and in the profound inquiry they displayed the strength and weakness of the human understanding. Of the four most celebrated schools, the Stoics and the Platonists endeavoured to reconcile the jarring interests of reason and piety. They have left us the most sublime proofs of the existence and perfections of the first cause ; but, as it was impossible for them to conceive the creation of matter, the workman in the Stoic philosophy was not sufficiently distinguished from the work ; whilst, on the contrary, the spiritual God of Plato and his disciples resembled an idea rather than a substance. The opinions of the Academics and Epicureans were of a less religious cast ; but, whilst the modest science of the former induced them to doubt, the positive ignorance of the latter urged them to deny, the providence of a Supreme Ruler. The spirit of inquiry, prompted by emulation and supported by freedom, had divided the public teachers of philosophy into a variety of contending sects ; but the ingenious youth, who from every part resorted to Athens and the other seats of learning in the Roman empire, were alike instructed in every

school to reject and to despise the religion of the multitude. How, indeed, was it possible that a philosopher should accept as divine truth the idle tales of the poets, and the incoherent traditions of antiquity ; or that he should adore as gods, those imperfect beings whom he must have despised, as men ! Against such unworthy adversaries, Cicero condescended to employ the arms of reason and eloquence ; but the satire of Lucian was a much more adequate as well as more efficacious weapon. We may be well assured that a writer conversant with the world would never have ventured to expose the gods of his country to public ridicule, had they not already been the objects of secret contempt among the polished and enlightened orders of society.

Notwithstanding the fashionable irreligion which prevailed in the age of the Antonines, both the interests of the priests and the credulity of the people were sufficiently respected. In their writings and conversation the philosophers of antiquity asserted the independent dignity of reason ; but they resigned their actions to the commands of law and of custom. Viewing with a smile of pity and indulgence the various errors of the vulgar, they diligently practised the ceremonies of their fathers, devoutly frequented the temples of the gods ; and, sometimes condescending to act a part on the theatre of superstition, they concealed the sentiments of an Atheist under the sacerdotal robes. Reasoners of such a temper were scarcely inclined to wrangle about their respective modes of faith or of worship. It was indifferent to them what shape the folly of the multitude might choose to assume ; and they approached, with the same inward contempt and the same external reverence, the altars of the Libyan, the Olympian, or the Capitoline Jupiter.

It is not easy to conceive from what motives a spirit of persecution could introduce itself into the Roman councils. The magistrates could not be actuated by a blind though honest bigotry, since the magistrates were themselves philosophers ; and the schools of Athens had given laws to the

senate. They could not be impelled by ambition or avarice, as the temporal and ecclesiastical powers were united in the same hands. The pontiffs were chosen among the most illustrious of the senators; and the office of Supreme Pontiff was constantly exercised by the emperors themselves. They knew and valued the advantages of religion, as it is connected with civil government. They encouraged the public festivals which humanize the manners of the people. They managed the arts of divination as a convenient instrument of policy; and they respected, as the firmest bond of society, the useful persuasion that, either in this or in a future life, the crime of perjury is most assuredly punished by the avenging gods. But, whilst they acknowledged the general advantages of religion, they were convinced that the various modes of worship contributed alike to the same salutary purposes; and that, in every country, the form of superstition which had received the sanction of time and experience was the best adapted to the climate and to its inhabitants. Avarice and taste very frequently despoiled the vanquished nations of the elegant statues of their gods and the rich ornaments of their temples; but, in the exercise of the religion which they derived from their ancestors, they uniformly experienced the indulgence, and even protection, of the Roman conquerors. The province of Gaul seems, and indeed only seems, an exception to this universal toleration. Under the specious pretext of abolishing human sacrifices, the emperors Tiberius and Claudius suppressed the dangerous power of the Druids; but the priests themselves, their gods, and their altars, subsisted in peaceful obscurity till the final destruction of Paganism.

Rome, the capital of a great monarchy, was incessantly filled with subjects and strangers from every part of the world, who all introduced and enjoyed the favourite superstitions of their native country. Every city in the empire was justified in maintaining the purity of its ancient ceremonies; and the Roman senate, using the common privilege,

sometimes interposed to check this inundation of foreign rites. The Egyptian superstition, of all the most contemptible and abject, was frequently prohibited; the temples of Serapis and Isis demolished, and their worshippers banished from Rome and Italy. But the zeal of fanaticism prevailed over the cold and feeble efforts of policy. The exiles returned, the proselytes multiplied, the temples were restored with increasing splendour, and Isis and Serapis at length assumed their place among the Roman deities. Nor was this indulgence a departure from the old maxims of government. In the purest ages of the commonwealth, Cybele and Æsculapius had been invited by solemn embassies; and it was customary to tempt the protectors of besieged cities by the promise of more distinguished honours than they possessed in their native country. Rome gradually became the common temple of her subjects; and the freedom of the city was bestowed on all the gods of mankind.

II. The narrow policy of preserving without any foreign mixture the pure blood of the ancient citizens, had checked the fortune, and hastened the ruin, of Athens and Sparta. The aspiring genius of Rome sacrificed vanity to ambition, and deemed it more prudent, as well as honourable, to adopt virtue and merit for her own wheresoever they were found, among slaves or strangers, enemies or barbarians. During the most flourishing æra of the Athenian commonwealth the number of citizens gradually decreased from about thirty to twenty-one thousand. If, on the contrary, we study the growth of the Roman republic, we may discover that, notwithstanding the incessant demands of wars and colonies, the citizens, who, in the first census of Servius Tullius, amounted to no more than eighty-three thousand, were multiplied, before the commencement of the social war, to the number of four hundred and sixty-three thousand men able to bear arms in the service of their country. When the allies of Rome claimed an equal share of honours and privileges, the senate indeed preferred the chance of

arms to an ignominious concession. The Samnites and the Lucanians paid the severe penalty of their rashness ; but the rest of the Italian states, as they successively returned to their duty, were admitted into the bosom of the republic, and soon contributed to the ruin of public freedom. Under a democratical government the citizens exercise the powers of sovereignty ; and those powers will be first abused, and afterwards lost, if they are committed to an unwieldy multitude. But, when the popular assemblies had been suppressed by the administration of the emperors, the conquerors were distinguished from the vanquished nations only as the first and most honourable order of subjects ; and their increase, however rapid, was no longer exposed to the same dangers. Yet the wisest princes who adopted the maxims of Augustus guarded with the strictest care the dignity of the Roman name, and diffused the freedom of the city with a prudent liberality.

Till the privileges of the Romans had been progressively extended to all the inhabitants of the empire, an important distinction was preserved between Italy and the provinces. The former was esteemed the centre of public unity, and the firm basis of the constitution. Italy claimed the birth, or at least the residence, of the emperors and the senate. The estates of the Italians were exempt from taxes, their persons from the arbitrary jurisdiction of governors. Their municipal corporations, formed after the perfect model of the capital, were intrusted, under the immediate eye of the supreme power, with the execution of the laws. From the foot of the Alps to the extremity of Calabria, all the natives of Italy were born citizens of Rome. Their partial distinctions were obliterated, and they insensibly coalesced into one great nation, united by language, manners, and civil institutions, and equal to the weight of a powerful empire. The republic gloried in her generous policy, and was frequently rewarded by the merit and services of her adopted sons. Had she always confined the distinction to Romans to the ancient families within the walls of the city.

that immortal name would have been deprived of some of its noblest ornaments. Virgil was a native of Mantua ; Horace was inclined to doubt whether he should call himself an Apulian or a Lucanian ; it was in Padua that an historian was found worthy to record the majestic series of Roman victories. The patriot family of the Catos emerged from Tusculum ; and the little town of Arpinum claimed the double honour of producing Marius and Cicero, the former of whom deserved, after Romulus and Camillus, to be styled the Third Founder of Rome ; and the latter, after saving his country from the designs of Catiline, enabled her to contend with Athens for the palm of eloquence.

The provinces of the Empire were destitute of any public force or constitutional freedom. In Etruria, in Greece, and in Gaul, it was the first care of the senate to dissolve those dangerous confederacies which taught mankind that, as the Roman arms prevailed by division, they might be resisted by union. Those princes whom the ostentation of gratitude or generosity permitted for a while to hold a precarious sceptre were dismissed from their thrones, as soon as they had performed their appointed task of fashioning to the yoke the vanquished nations. The free states and cities which had embraced the cause of Rome were rewarded with a nominal alliance, and insensibly sank into real servitude. The public authority was everywhere exercised by the ministers of the senate and of the emperors, and that authority was absolute and without control. But the same salutary maxims of government, which had secured the peace and obedience of Italy, were extended to the most distant conquests. A nation of Romans was gradually formed in the provinces, by the double expedient of introducing colonies, and of admitting the most faithful and deserving of the provincials to the freedom of Rome.

“Wheresoever the Roman conquers, he inhabits,” is a very just observation of Seneca, confirmed by history and experience. The natives of Italy, allured by pleasure or by

interest, hastened to enjoy the advantages of victory ; and we may remark that, about forty years after the reduction of Asia, eighty thousand Romans were massacred in one day by the cruel orders of Mithridates. These voluntary exiles were engaged for the most part in the occupations of commerce, agriculture, and the farm of the revenue. But after the legions were rendered permanent by the emperors, the provinces were peopled by a race of soldiers ; and the veterans, whether they received the reward of their service in land or in money, usually settled with their families in the country where they had honourably spent their youth. Throughout the empire, but more particularly in the western parts, the most fertile districts and the most convenient situations were reserved for the establishment of colonies ; some of which were of a civil and others of a military nature. In their manners and internal policy, the colonies formed a perfect representation of their great parent ; and [as] they were soon endeared to the natives by the ties of friendship and alliance, they effectually diffused a reverence for the Roman name, and a desire which was seldom disappointed of sharing, in due time, its honours and advantages. The municipal cities insensibly equalled the rank and splendour of the colonies ; and in the reign of Hadrian it was disputed which was the preferable condition, of those societies which had issued from, or those which had been received into, the bosom of Rome. The right of *Latium*, as it was called, conferred on the cities to which it had been granted a more partial favour. The magistrates only, at the expiration of their office, assumed the quality of Roman citizens ; but as those offices were annual, in a few years they circulated round the principal families. Those of the provincials who were permitted to bear arms in the legions ; those who exercised any civil employment ; all, in a word, who performed any public service, or displayed any personal talents, were rewarded with a present, whose value was continually diminished by the increasing liberality of the emperors. Yet even in the

age of the Antonines, when the freedom of the city had been bestowed on the greater number of their subjects, it was still accompanied with very solid advantages. The bulk of the people acquired, with that title, the benefit of the Roman laws, particularly in the interesting articles of marriage, testaments, and inheritances; and the road of fortune was open to those whose pretensions were seconded by favour or merit. The grandsons of the Gauls who had besieged Julius Cæsar in Alesia commanded legions, governed provinces, and were admitted into the senate of Rome. Their ambition, instead of disturbing the tranquility of the state, was intimately connected with its safety and greatness.

So sensible were the Romans of the influence of language over national manners, that it was their most serious care to extend, with the progress of their arms, the use of the Latin tongue. The ancient dialects of Italy, the Sabine, the Etruscan, and the Venetian, sunk into oblivion; but in the provinces, the east was less docile than the west to the voice of its victorious preceptors. This obvious difference marked the two portions of the empire with a distinction of colours, which, though it was in some degree concealed during the meridian splendour of prosperity, became gradually more visible as the shades of night descended upon the Roman world. The western countries were civilized by the same hands which subdued them. As soon as the barbarians were reconciled to obedience, their minds were opened to any new impressions of knowledge and politeness. The language of Virgil and Cicero, though with some inevitable mixture of corruption, was so universally adopted in Africa, Spain, Gaul, Britain, and Pannonia, that the faint traces of the Punic or Celtic idioms were preserved only in the mountains, or among the peasants. Education and study insensibly inspired the natives of those countries with the sentiments of the Romans; and Italy gave fashions, as well as laws, to her Latin provincials. They solicited with more ardour, and obtained



with more facility, the freedom and honours of the state ; supported the national dignity in letters and in arms ; and, at length, in the person of Trajan, produced an emperor whom the Scipios would not have disowned for their countryman. The situation of the Greeks was very different from that of the barbarians. The former had been long since civilized and corrupted. They had too much taste to relinquish their language, and too much vanity to adopt any foreign institutions. Still preserving the prejudices, after they had lost the virtues, of their ancestors, they affected to despise the unpolished manners of the Roman conquerors, whilst they were compelled to respect their superior wisdom and power. Nor was the influence of the Grecian language and sentiments confined to the narrow limits of that once celebrated country. Their empire, by the progress of colonies and conquest, had been diffused from the Hadriatic to the Euphrates and the Nile. Asia was covered with Greek cities, and the long reign of the Macedonian kings had introduced a silent revolution into Syria and Egypt. In their pompous courts those princes united the elegance of Athens with the luxury of the East, and the example of the court was imitated, at an humble distance, by the higher ranks of their subjects. Such was the general division of the Roman empire into the Latin and Greek languages. To these we may add a third distinction for the body of the natives in Syria, and especially in Egypt. The use of their ancient dialects, by secluding them from the commerce of mankind, checked the improvements of those barbarians. The slothful effeminacy of the former exposed them to the contempt, the sullen ferociousness of the latter excited the aversion, of the conquerors. Those nations had submitted to the Roman power, but they seldom desired or deserved the freedom of the city ; and it was remarked that more than two hundred and thirty years elapsed after the ruin of the Ptolemies, before an Egyptian was admitted into the senate of Rome.

It is a just though trite observation, that victorious Rome was herself subdued by the arts of Greece. Those immortal writers who still command the admiration of modern Europe soon became the favourite object of study and imitation in Italy and the western provinces. But the elegant amusements of the Romans were not suffered to interfere with their sound maxims of policy. Whilst they acknowledged the charms of the Greek, they asserted the dignity of the Latin, tongue, and the exclusive use of the latter was inflexibly maintained in the administration of civil as well as military government. The two languages exercised at the same time their separate jurisdiction throughout the empire: the former, as the natural idiom of science; the latter, as the legal dialect of public transactions. Those who united letters with business were equally conversant with both; and it was almost impossible, in any province, to find a Roman subject, of a liberal education, who was at once a stranger to the Greek and to the Latin language.

It was by such institutions that the nations of the empire insensibly melted away into the Roman name and people. But there still remained, in the centre of every province and of every family, an unhappy condition of men who endured the weight, without sharing the benefits, of society. In the free states of antiquity the domestic slaves were exposed to the wanton rigour of despotism. The perfect settlement of the Roman empire was preceded by ages of violence and rapine. The slaves consisted, for the most part, of barbarian captives, taken in thousands by the chance of war, purchased at a vile price, accustomed to a life of independence, and impatient to break and to revenge their fetters. Against such internal enemies, whose desperate insurrections had more than once reduced the republic to the brink of destruction, the most severe regulations and the most cruel treatment seemed almost justified by the great law of self-preservation. But when the principal nations of Europe, Asia, and Africa were united under

the laws of one sovereign, the source of foreign supplies flowed with much less abundance, and the Romans were reduced to the milder but more tedious method of propagation. In their numerous families, and particularly in their country estates, they encouraged the marriage of their slaves. The sentiments of nature, the habits of education, and the possession of a dependent species of property, contributed to alleviate the hardships of servitude. The existence of a slave became an object of greater value, and though his happiness still depended on the temper and circumstances of the master, the humanity of the latter, instead of being restrained by fear, was encouraged by the sense of his own interest. The progress of manners was accelerated by the virtue or policy of the emperors; and by the edicts of Hadrian and the Antonines the protection of the laws was extended to the most abject part of mankind. The jurisdiction of life and death over the slaves, a power long exercised and often abused, was taken out of private hands, and reserved to the magistrates alone. The subterraneous prisons were abolished; and, upon a just complaint of intolerable treatment, the injured slave obtained either his deliverance or a less cruel master.

Hope, the best comfort of our imperfect condition, was not denied to the Roman slave; and, if he had any opportunity of making himself either useful or agreeable, he might very naturally expect that the diligence and fidelity of a few years would be rewarded with the inestimable gift of freedom. The benevolence of the master was so frequently prompted by the meaner suggestions of vanity and avarice, that the laws found it more necessary to restrain than to encourage a profuse and undistinguishing liberality, which might degenerate into a very dangerous abuse. It was a maxim of ancient jurisprudence, that a slave had not any country of his own; he acquired with his liberty an admission into the political society of which his patron was a member. The consequences of this maxim would have prostituted the privileges of the Roman city to a mean

and promiscuous multitude. Some seasonable exceptions were therefore provided ; and the honourable distinction was confined to such slaves only as, for just causes, and with the approbation of the magistrate, should receive a solemn and legal manumission. Even these chosen freedmen obtained no more than the private rights of citizens, and were rigorously excluded from civil or military honours. Whatever might be the merit or fortune of their sons, *they* likewise were esteemed unworthy of a seat in the senate ; nor were the traces of a servile origin allowed to be completely obliterated till the third or fourth generation. Without destroying the distinction of ranks, a distant prospect of freedom and honours was presented, even to those whom pride and prejudice almost disdained to number among the human species.

It was once proposed to discriminate the slaves by a peculiar habit, but it was justly apprehended that there might be some danger in acquainting them with their own numbers. Without interpreting, in their utmost strictness, the liberal appellations of legions and myriads, we may venture to pronounce that the proportion of slaves, who were valued as property, was more considerable than that of servants, who can be computed only as an expense. The youths of a promising genius were instructed in the arts and sciences, and their price was ascertained by the degree of their skill and talents. Almost every profession, either liberal or mechanical, might be found in the household of an opulent senator. The ministers of pomp and sensuality were multiplied beyond the conception of modern luxury. It was more for the interest of the merchant or manufacturer to purchase than to hire his workmen ; and in the country slaves were employed as the *cheapest* and most laborious instruments of agriculture. To confirm the general observation, and to display the multitude of slaves, we might allege a variety of particular instances. It was discovered, on a very melancholy occasion, that four hundred slaves were maintained in a single palace of Rome.

The same number of four hundred belonged to an estate, which an African widow, of a very private condition, resigned to her son, whilst she reserved for herself a much larger share of her property. A freedman, under the reign of Augustus, though his fortune had suffered great losses in the civil wars, left behind him three thousand six hundred yoke of oxen, two hundred and fifty thousand head of smaller cattle, and, what was almost included in the description of cattle, four thousand one hundred and sixteen slaves.

The number of subjects who acknowledged the laws of Rome, of citizens, of provincials, and of slaves, cannot now be fixed with such a degree of accuracy as the importance of the object would deserve. We are informed that, when the emperor Claudius exercised the office of censor, he took an account of six millions nine hundred and forty-five thousand Roman citizens, who, with the proportion of women and children, must have amounted to about twenty millions of souls. The multitude of subjects of an inferior rank was uncertain and fluctuating. But, after weighing with attention every circumstance which could influence the balance, it seems probable that there existed, in the time of Claudius, about twice as many provincials as there were citizens, of either sex and of every age; and that the slaves were at least equal in number to the free inhabitants of the Roman world. The total amount of this imperfect calculation would rise to about one hundred and twenty millions of persons: a degree of population which possibly exceeds that of modern Europe, and forms the most numerous society that has ever been united under the same system of government.

## CHAPTER II

### *THE ORGANIZATION OF THE EARLY CHURCH*

[INTRODUCTION.—One of the many remarkable phenomena of the period was the silent growth of the Christian religion in the heart of the Roman Empire. Christianity was at first looked upon as an obscure Jewish sect ; its followers were persecuted, not only by tyrants like Nero and Diocletian, but by model rulers like Marcus Aurelius. Gibbon gives five explanations for the triumph of Christianity over its numerous rivals—the zeal of the Jews, the claims made by the Christians to miraculous powers, the promise of a life after death for its followers, the virtues of the Christians, and Christian activity in Church government. In A.D. 325, after a long series of trials, came at last the Peace of the Church, when Constantine recognized Christianity as *one* of the religions of the Empire. Its final triumph was in 390, when Theodosius declared Christianity to be the *only* religion of the Empire, made Paganism illegal, and closed or even pulled down many of the temples.]

THE government of the church has often been the subject, as well as the prize, of religious contention. The hostile disputants of Rome, of Paris, of Oxford and of Geneva have alike struggled to reduce the primitive and apostolic model to the respective standards of their own policy. The few who have pursued this inquiry with more candour and impartiality are of opinion that the apostles declined the office of legislation, and rather chose to endure *some* partial scandals and divisions than to exclude the Christians of a future age from the liberty of varying their forms of ecclesiastical government according to the changes of times and circumstances. The scheme of policy which, under their approbation, was adopted for the use of the first century may be discovered from the practice of Jerusalem, of

Ephesus, or of Corinth. The societies which were instituted in the cities of the Roman empire were united only by the ties of faith and charity. Independence and equality formed the basis of their internal constitution. The want of discipline and human learning was supplied by the occasional assistance of the *prophets*, who were called to that function, without distinction of age, of sex, or of natural abilities, and who, as often as they felt the divine impulse, poured forth the effusions of the spirit in the assembly of the faithful. But these extraordinary gifts were frequently abused or misapplied by the prophetic teachers. They displayed them at an improper season, presumptuously disturbed the service of the assembly, and by their pride or mistaken zeal they introduced, particularly into the apostolic church of Corinth, a long and melancholy train of disorders. As the institution of prophets became useless, and even pernicious, their powers were withdrawn and their office abolished. The public functions of religion were solely intrusted to the established ministers of the church, the *bishops* and the *presbyters*; two appellations which, in their first origin, appear to have distinguished the same office and the same order of persons. The name of Presbyter was expressive of their age, or rather of their gravity and wisdom. The title of Bishop denoted their inspection over the faith and manners of the Christians who were committed to their pastoral care. In proportion to the respective numbers of the faithful, a larger or smaller number of these *episcopal presbyters* guided each infant congregation with equal authority and with united councils.

But the most perfect equality of freedom requires the directing hand of a superior magistrate; and the order of public deliberations soon introduces the office of a president, invested at least with the authority of collecting the sentiments, and of executing the resolutions, of the assembly. A regard for the public tranquillity, which would so frequently have been interrupted by annual or by occasional elections, induced the primitive Christians to constitute an

honourable and perpetual magistracy, and to choose one of the wisest and most holy among their presbyters to execute, during his life, the duties of their ecclesiastical governor. It was under these circumstances that the lofty title of Bishop began to raise itself above the humble appellation of presbyter; and, while the latter remained the most natural distinction for the members of every Christian senate, the former was appropriated to the dignity of its new president. The advantages of this episcopal form of government, which appears to have been introduced before the end of the first century, were so obvious, and so important for the future greatness, as well as the present peace, of Christianity, that it was adopted without delay by all the societies which were already scattered over the empire, had acquired in a very early period the sanction of antiquity, and is still revered by the most powerful churches, both of the East and of the West, as a primitive and even as a divine establishment. It is needless to observe that the pious and humble presbyters who were first dignified with the episcopal title could not possess, and would probably have rejected, the power and pomp which now encircles the tiara of the Roman pontiff, or the mitre of a German prelate. But we may define, in a few words, the narrow limits of their original jurisdiction, which was chiefly of a spiritual, though in some instances, of a temporal, nature. It consisted in the administration of the sacraments and discipline of the church, the superintendency of religious ceremonies, which imperceptibly increased in number and variety, the consecration of ecclesiastical ministers, to whom the bishop assigned their respective functions, the management of the public fund, and the determination of all such differences as the faithful were unwilling to expose before the tribunal of an idolatrous judge. These powers, during a short period, were exercised according to the advice of the presbyteral college, and with the consent and approbation of the assembly of Christians. The primitive bishops were considered only as the first of their equals, and the



honourable servants of a free people. Whenever the episcopal chair became vacant by death, a new president was chosen among the presbyters by the suffrage of the whole congregation, every member of which supposed himself invested with a sacred and sacerdotal character.

Such was the mild and equal constitution by which the Christians were governed more than a hundred years after the death of the apostles. Every society formed within itself a separate and independent republic : and, although the most distant of these little states maintained a mutual as well as friendly intercourse of letters and deputations, the Christian world was not yet connected by any supreme authority or legislative assembly. As the numbers of the faithful were gradually multiplied, they discovered the advantages that might result from a closer union of their interest and designs. Towards the end of the second century, the churches of Greece and Asia adopted the useful institutions of provincial synods, and they may justly be supposed to have borrowed the model of a representative council from the celebrated examples of their own country, the Amphictyons, the Achæan league, or the assemblies of the Ionian cities. It was soon established as a custom and as a law that the bishops of the independent churches should meet in the capital of the province at the stated periods of spring and autumn. Their deliberations were assisted by the advice of a few distinguished presbyters, and moderated by the presence of a listening multitude. Their decrees, which were styled Canons, regulated every important controversy of faith and discipline ; and it was natural to believe that a liberal effusion of the Holy Spirit would be poured on the united assembly of the delegates of the Christian people. The institution of synods was so well suited to private ambition and to public interest that in the space of a few years it was received throughout the whole empire. A regular correspondence was established between the provincial councils, which mutually communicated and approved their respective proceedings ; and the

Catholic church soon assumed the form, and acquired the strength, of a great federative republic.

As the legislative authority of the particular churches was insensibly superseded by the use of councils, the bishops obtained by their alliance a much larger share of executive and arbitrary power ; and, as soon as they were connected by a sense of their common interest, they were enabled to attack, with united vigour, the original rights of their clergy and people. The prelates of the third century imperceptibly changed the language of exhortation into that of command, scattered the seeds of future usurpations, and supplied, by scripture allegories and declamatory rhetoric, their deficiency of force and of reason. They exalted the unity and power of the church, as it was represented in the EPISCOPAL OFFICE, of which every bishop enjoyed an equal and undivided portion. Princes and magistrates, it was often repeated, might boast an earthly claim to a transitory dominion ; it was the episcopal authority alone which was derived from the Deity, and extended itself over this and over another world. The bishops were the vicegerents of Christ, the successors of the apostles, and the mystic substitutes of the high priest of the Mosaic law. Their exclusive privilege of conferring the sacerdotal character invaded the freedom both of clerical and of popular elections ; and if, in the administration of the church, they still consulted the judgment of the presbyters or the inclination of the people, they most carefully inculcated the merit of such a voluntary condescension. The bishops acknowledged the supreme authority which resided in the assembly of their brethren ; but, in the government of his peculiar diocese, each of them exacted from his *flock* the same implicit obedience as if that favourite metaphor had been literally just, and as if the shepherd had been of a more exalted nature than that of his sheep. This obedience, however, was not imposed without some efforts on one side, and some resistance on the other. The democratical part of the constitution was, in many places, very warmly

supported by the zealous or interested opposition of the inferior clergy. But their patriotism received the ignominious epithets of faction and schism ; and the episcopal cause was indebted for its rapid progress to the labours of many active prelates, who, like Cyprian of Carthage, could reconcile the arts of the most ambitious statesman with the Christian virtues which seem adapted to the character of a saint and martyr.

The same causes which at first had destroyed the equality of the presbyters introduced among the bishops a pre-eminence of rank, and from thence a superiority of jurisdiction. As often as in the spring and autumn they met in provincial synod, the difference of personal merit and reputation was very sensibly felt among the members of the assembly, and the multitude was governed by the wisdom and eloquence of the few. But the order of public proceedings required a more regular and less invidious distinction ; the office of perpetual presidents in the councils of each province was conferred on the bishops of the principal city, and these aspiring prelates, who soon acquired the lofty titles of Metropolitans and Primates, secretly prepared themselves to usurp over their episcopal brethren the same authority which the bishops had so lately assumed above the college of presbyters. Nor was it long before an emulation of pre-eminence and power prevailed among the metropolitans themselves, each of them affecting to display, in the most pompous terms, the temporal honours and advantages of the city over which he presided ; the numbers and opulence of the Christians who were subject to their pastoral care ; the saints and martyrs who had arisen among them, and the purity with which they preserved the tradition of the faith, as it had been transmitted through a series of orthodox bishops from the apostle or the apostolic disciple, to whom the foundation of their church was ascribed. From every cause, either of a civil or of an ecclesiastical nature, it was easy to foresee that Rome must enjoy the respect, and would soon claim the obedience, of the pro-

vinces. The society of the faithful bore a just proportion to the capital of the empire ; and the Roman church was the greatest, the most numerous, and, in regard to the West, the most ancient of all the Christian establishments, many of which had received their religion from the pious labours of her missionaries. Instead of *one* apostolic founder, the utmost boast of Antioch, of Ephesus, or of Corinth, the banks of the Tiber were supposed to have been honoured with the preaching and martyrdom of the *two* most eminent among the apostles ; and the bishops of Rome very prudently claimed the inheritance of whatsoever prerogatives were attributed either to the person or to the office of St. Peter. The bishops of Italy and of the provinces were disposed to allow them a primacy of order and association (such was their very accurate expression) in the Christian aristocracy. But the power of a monarch was rejected with abhorrence, and the aspiring genius of Rome experienced, from the nations of Asia and Africa, a more vigorous resistance to her spiritual, than she had formerly done to her temporal, dominion. The patriotic Cyprian, who ruled with the most absolute sway the church of Carthage and the provincial synods, opposed with resolution and success the ambition of the Roman pontiff, artfully connected his own cause with that of the eastern bishops, and, like Hannibal, sought out new allies in the heart of Asia. If this Punic war was carried on without any effusion of blood, it was owing much less to the moderation than to the weakness of the contending prelates. Invectives and excommunications were *their* only weapons ; and these, during the progress of the whole controversy, they hurled against each other with equal fury and devotion. The hard necessity of censuring either a pope, or a saint and martyr, distresses the modern Catholics, whenever they are obliged to relate the particulars of a dispute in which the champions of religion indulged such passions as seem much more adapted to the senate or to the camp.

The progress of the ecclesiastical authority gave birth

to the memorable distinction of the laity and of the clergy, which had been unknown to the Greeks and Romans. The former of these appellations comprehended the body of the Christian people; the latter, according to the signification of the word, was appropriated to the chosen portion that had been set apart for the service of religion; a celebrated order of men which has furnished the most important, though not always the most edifying, subjects for modern history. Their mutual hostilities sometimes disturbed the peace of the infant church, but their zeal and activity were united in the common cause, and the love of power, which (under the most artful disguises) could insinuate itself into the breasts of bishops and martyrs, animated them to increase the number of their subjects, and to enlarge the limits of the Christian empire. They were destitute of any temporal force, and they were for a long time discouraged and oppressed, rather than assisted, by the civil magistrate; but they had acquired, and they employed within their own society, the two most efficacious instruments of government, rewards and punishments; the former derived from the pious liberality, the latter from the devout apprehensions, of the faithful.

I. The community of goods, which had so agreeably amused the imagination of Plato, and which subsisted in some degree among the austere sect of the Essenians, was adopted for a short time in the primitive church. The fervour of the first proselytes prompted them to sell those worldly possessions which they despised, to lay the price of them at the feet of the apostles, and to content themselves with receiving an equal share out of the general distribution. The progress of the Christian religion relaxed, and gradually abolished, this generous institution, which, in hands less pure than those of the apostles, would too soon have been corrupted and abused by the returning selfishness of human nature; and the converts who embraced the new religion were permitted to retain the possession of their patrimony, to receive legacies and inheritances, and, to

increase their separate property by all the lawful means of trade and industry. Instead of an absolute sacrifice, a moderate proportion was accepted by the ministers of the gospel ; and in their weekly or monthly assemblies, every believer, according to the exigency of the occasion, and the measure of his wealth and piety, presented his voluntary offering for the use of the common fund. Nothing, however inconsiderable, was refused ; but it was diligently inculcated that, in the article of Tythes, the Mosaic law was still of divine obligation ; and that, since the Jews, under a less perfect discipline, had been commanded to pay a tenth part of all that they possessed, it would become the disciples of Christ to distinguish themselves by a superior degree of liberality, and to acquire some merit by resigning a superfluous treasure, which must so soon be annihilated with the world itself. It is almost unnecessary to observe that the revenue of each particular church, which was of so uncertain and fluctuating a nature, must have varied with the poverty or the opulence of the faithful, as they were dispersed in obscure villages, or collected in the great cities of the empire. In the time of the emperor Decius, it was the opinion of the magistrates that the Christians of Rome were possessed of very considerable wealth ; that vessels of gold and silver were used in their religious worship ; and that many among their proselytes had sold their lands and houses to increase the public riches of the sect, at the expense, indeed, of their unfortunate children, who found themselves beggars, because their parents had been saints. We should listen with distrust to the suspicions of strangers and enemies : on this occasion, however, they receive a very specious and probable colour from the two following circumstances, the only ones that have reached our knowledge, which define any precise sums, or convey any distinct idea. Almost at the same period, the bishop of Carthage, from a society less opulent than that of Rome, collected a hundred thousand sesterces (above eight hundred and fifty pounds sterling), on a sudden call of charity, to

redeem the brethren of Numidia, who had been carried away captives by the barbarians of the desert. About an hundred years before the reign of Decius, the Roman church had received, in a single donation, the sum of two hundred thousand sesterces from a stranger of Pontus, who proposed to fix his residence in the capital. These oblations, for the most part, were made in money ; nor was the society of Christians either desirous or capable of acquiring, to any considerable degree, the incumbrance of landed property. It had been provided by several laws, which were enacted with the same design as our statutes of mortmain, that no real estates should be given or bequeathed to any corporate body, without either a special privilege or a particular dispensation from the emperor or from the senate ; who were seldom disposed to grant them in favour of a sect, at first the object of their contempt, and at last of their fears or jealousy. A transaction, however, is related under the reign of Alexander Severus, which discovers that the restraint was sometimes eluded or suspended, and that the Christians were permitted to claim and to possess lands within the limits of Rome itself. The progress of Christianity and the civil confusion of the empire contributed to relax the severity of the laws ; and, before the close of the third century, many considerable estates were bestowed on the opulent churches of Rome, Milan, Carthage, Antioch, Alexandria, and the other great cities of Italy and the provinces.

The bishop was the natural steward of the church ; the public stock was intrusted to his care, without account or control ; the presbyters were confined to their spiritual functions, and the more dependent order of deacons was solely employed in the management and distribution of the ecclesiastical revenue. If we may give credit to the vehement declamations of Cyprian, there were too many among his African brethren who, in the execution of their charge, violated every precept, not only of evangelic perfection, but even of moral virtue. By some of these unfaithful

stewards, the riches of the church were lavished in sensual pleasures, by others they were perverted to the purposes of private gain, of fraudulent purchases, and of rapacious usury. But, as long as the contributions of the Christian people were free and unconstrained, the abuse of their confidence could not be very frequent, and the general uses to which their liberality was applied reflected honour on the religious society. A decent portion was reserved for the maintenance of the bishop and his clergy; a sufficient sum was allotted for the expenses of the public worship, of which the feasts of love, the *agapæ*, as they were called, constituted a very pleasing part. The whole remainder was the sacred patrimony of the poor. According to the discretion of the bishop, it was distributed to support widows and orphans, the lame, the sick, and the aged of the community; to comfort strangers and pilgrims, and to alleviate the misfortunes of prisoners and captives, more especially when their sufferings had been occasioned by their firm attachment to the cause of religion. A generous intercourse of charity united the most distant provinces, and the smaller congregations were cheerfully assisted by the alms of their more opulent brethren. Such an institution, which paid less regard to the merit than to the distress of the object, very materially conduced to the progress of Christianity. The Pagans, who were actuated by a sense of humanity, while they derided the doctrines, acknowledged the benevolence, of the new sect. The prospect of immediate relief and of future protection allured into its hospitable bosom many of those unhappy persons whom the neglect of the world would have abandoned to the miseries of want, of sickness, and of old age. There is some reason likewise to believe that great numbers of infants who, according to the inhuman practice of the times, had been exposed by their parents were frequently rescued from death, baptized, educated, and maintained by the piety of the Christians, and at the expense of the public treasure.



¶II. It is the undoubted right of every society to exclude from its communion and benefits such among its members as reject or violate those regulations which have been established by general consent. In the exercise of this power, the censures of the Christian church were chiefly directed against scandalous sinners, and particularly those who were guilty of murder, of fraud, or of incontinence ; against the authors, or the followers, of any heretical opinions which had been condemned by the judgment of the episcopal order ; and against those unhappy persons who, whether from choice or from compulsion, had polluted themselves after their baptism by any act of idolatrous worship. The consequences of excommunication were of a temporal as well as a spiritual nature. The Christian against whom it was pronounced was deprived of any part in the oblations of the faithful. The ties both of religious and of private friendship were dissolved ; he found himself a profane object of abhorrence to the persons whom he the most esteemed, or by whom he had been the most tenderly beloved ; and, as far as an expulsion from a respectable society could imprint on his character a mark of disgrace, he was shunned or suspected by the generality of mankind. The situation of these unfortunate exiles was in itself very painful and melancholy ; but, as it usually happens, their apprehensions far exceeded their sufferings. The benefits of the Christian communion were those of eternal life, nor could they erase from their minds the awful opinion, that to those ecclesiastical governors by whom they were condemned the Deity had committed the keys of Hell and of Paradise. The heretics, indeed, who might be supported by the consciousness of their intentions, and by the flattering hope that they alone had discovered the true path of salvation, endeavoured to regain, in their separate assemblies, those comforts, temporal as well as spiritual, which they no longer derived from the great society of Christians. But almost all those who had reluctantly yielded to the power of vice or idolatry were sensible of their fallen con-

dition, and anxiously desirous of being restored to the benefits of the Christian communion.

With regard to the treatment of these penitents, two opposite opinions, the one of justice, the other of mercy, divided the primitive church. The more rigid and inflexible casuists refused them for ever, and without exception, the meanest place in the holy community, which they had disgraced or deserted, and, leaving them to the remorse of a guilty conscience, indulged them only with a faint ray of hope that the contrition of their life and death might possibly be accepted by the Supreme Being. A milder sentiment was embraced, in practice as well as in theory, by the purest and most respectable of the Christian churches. The gates of reconciliation and of Heaven were seldom shut against the returning penitent; but a severe and solemn form of discipline was instituted, which, while it served to expiate his crime, might powerfully deter the spectators from the imitation of his example. Humbled by a public confession, emaciated by fasting, and clothed in sackcloth, the penitent lay prostrate at the door of the assembly, imploring, with tears, the pardon of his offences, and soliciting the prayers of the faithful. If the fault was of a very heinous nature, whole years of penance were esteemed an inadequate satisfaction to the Divine Justice; and it was always by slow and painful gradations that the sinner, the heretic, or the apostate was re-admitted into the bosom of the church. A sentence of perpetual excommunication was, however, reserved for some crimes of an extraordinary magnitude, and particularly for the inexcusable relapses of those penitents who had already experienced and abused the clemency of their ecclesiastical superiors. According to the circumstances or the number of the guilty, the exercise of the Christian discipline was varied by the discretion of the bishops. The councils of Ancyra and Illiberis were held about the same time, the one in Galatia, the other in Spain; but their respective canons, which are still extant, seem to breathe a very different spirit. The

Galatian, who after his baptism had repeatedly sacrificed to idols, might obtain his pardon by a penance of seven years, and, if he had seduced others to imitate his example, only three years more were added to the term of his exile. But the unhappy Spaniard, who had committed the same offence, was deprived of the hope of reconciliation, even in the article of death ; and his idolatry was placed at the head of a list of seventeen other crimes, against which a sentence, no less terrible, was pronounced. Among these we may distinguish the inexpiable guilt of calumniating a bishop, a presbyter, or even a deacon.

The well-tempered mixture of liberality and rigour, the judicious dispensation of rewards and punishments, according to the maxims of policy as well as justice, constituted the *human* strength of the church. The bishops, whose paternal care extended itself to the government of both worlds, were sensible of the importance of these prerogatives, and, covering their ambition with the fair pretence of the love of order, they were jealous of any rival in the exercise of a discipline so necessary to prevent the desertion of those troops which had enlisted themselves under the banner of the cross, and whose numbers every day became more considerable. From the imperious declamations of Cyprian we should naturally conclude that the doctrines of excommunication and penance formed the most essential part of religion ; and that it was much less dangerous for the disciples of Christ to neglect the observance of the moral duties than to despise the censures and authority of their bishops. Sometimes we might imagine that we were listening to the voice of Moses, when he commanded the earth to open, and to swallow up, in consuming flames, the rebellious race which refused obedience to the priesthood of Aaron ; and we should sometimes suppose that we heard a Roman consul asserting the majesty of the republic, and declaring his inflexible resolution to enforce the rigour of the laws. “ If such irregularities are suffered with impunity (it is thus that the bishop of Carthage chides the

lenity of his colleague), if such irregularities are suffered, there is an end of EPISCOPAL VIGOUR ; an end of the sublime and divine power of governing the church, an end of Christianity itself." Cyprian had renounced those temporal honours which it is probable he would never have obtained ; but the acquisition of such absolute command over the consciences and understanding of a congregation, however obscure or despised by the world, is more truly grateful to the pride of the human heart than the possession of the most despotic power imposed by arms and conquest on a reluctant people.

## CHAPTER III

### *ROME IN THE FIFTH CENTURY, A.D.*

[INTRODUCTION.—The Goths were a Germanic people, divided into two great tribes, the Eastern or Ostrogoths, dwelling north of the Black Sea, and the Western or Visigoths, who were settled in Dacia, north of the lower Danube. About A.D. 375, the Huns, a fierce Mongolian tribe from Central Asia, crossed the Volga, driving the Ostrogoths before them. These in turn attacked the Visigoths, who thereupon poured into Thrace, defeating the Emperor Valens near Adrianople. They were temporarily pacified by Theodosius, but his successor Arcadius diverted them against Italy, which they invaded under their great leader Alaric. In 410, Alaric plundered Rome, sparing only the Churches. After his death, they settled in Southern Gaul, whence they were driven by Clovis in 507. They then formed the kingdom of Toledo in Spain, until the coming of the Saracens in 711. Meanwhile, the Vandals, another Germanic tribe which had found its way to Carthage, plundered Rome in 455. The last Roman Emperor, Romulus Augustulus, was deposed by the German chieftain Odoacer in 476, and in 493, the Ostrogoths under Theodoric defeated Odoacer, and ruled Italy until their overthrow by Narses, the General of Justinian, in 555. Gibbon here paints a wonderfully vivid picture of Roman Society, cultured but degenerate, living in careless ease of the eve of these cataclysmic invasions, which were destined to overthrow the Roman Empire and replace it by the Germanic kingdoms from which the States of modern Europe have sprung.]

THE opulent nobles of an immense capital,<sup>3</sup> who were never excited by the pursuit of military glory, and seldom engaged in the occupations of civil government, naturally resigned their leisure to the business and amusements of private life. At Rome, commerce was always held in contempt; but the senators, from the first age of the republic, increased their patrimony, and multiplied their clients, by the lucrative practice of usury; and the obsolete laws were eluded, or

violated, by the mutual inclinations and interests of both parties. A considerable mass of treasure must always have existed at Rome, either in the current coin of the empire or in the form of gold and silver plate ; and there were many sideboards, in the time of Pliny, which contained more solid silver than had been transported by Scipio from vanquished Carthage. The greater part of the nobles, who dissipated their fortunes in profuse luxury, found themselves poor in the midst of wealth, and idle in a constant round of dissipation. Their desires were continually gratified by the labour of a thousand hands ; of the numerous train of their domestic slaves, who were actuated by the fear of punishment ; and of the various professions of artificers and merchants, who were more powerfully impelled by the hopes of gain. The ancients were destitute of many of the conveniences of life which have been invented or improved by the progress of industry ; and the plenty of glass and linen has diffused more real comforts among the modern nations of Europe than the senators of Rome could derive from all the refinements of pompous or sensual luxury. Their luxury and their manners have been the subject of minute and laborious disquisition ; but, as such inquiries would divert me too long from the design of the present work, I shall produce an authentic state of Rome and its inhabitants, which is more peculiarly applicable to the period of the Gothic invasion. Ammianus Marcellinus, who prudently chose the capital of the empire as the residence the best adapted to the historian of his own times, has mixed with the narrative of public events a lively representation of the scenes with which he was familiarly conversant. The judicious reader will not always approve the asperity of censure, the choice of circumstances, or the style of expression ; he will perhaps detect the latent prejudices and personal resentments which soured the temper of Ammianus himself ; but he will surely observe, with philosophic curiosity, the interesting and original picture of the manners of Rome.

“The greatness of Rome” (such is the language of the historian) “was founded on the rare and almost incredible alliance of virtue and of fortune. The long period of her infancy was employed in a laborious struggle against the tribes of Italy, the neighbours and enemies of the rising city. In the strength and ardour of youth, she sustained the storms of war; carried her victorious arms beyond the seas and the mountains; and brought home triumphal laurels from every country of the globe. At length, verging towards old age, and sometimes conquering by the terror only of her name, she sought the blessings of ease and tranquillity. The VENERABLE CITY, which had trampled on the necks of the fiercest nations, and established a system of laws, the perpetual guardians of justice and freedom, was content, like a wise and wealthy parent, to devolve on the Cæsars, her favourite sons, the care of governing her ample patrimony. A secure and profound peace, such as had been once enjoyed in the reign of Numa, succeeded to the tumults of a republic; while Rome was still adored as the queen of the earth, and the subject nations still revered the name of the people and the majesty of the senate. But this native splendour” (continues Ammianus) “is degraded and sullied by the conduct of some nobles; who, unmindful of their own dignity and of that of their country, assume an unbounded licence of vice and folly. They contend with each other in the empty vanity of titles and surnames; and curiously select or invent the most lofty and sonorous appellations, Reburrus, or Fabunius, Pagonius, or Tarrasius, which may impress the ears of the vulgar with astonishment and respect. From a vain ambition of perpetuating their memory, they affect to multiply their likeness in statues of bronze and marble; nor are they satisfied, unless those statues are covered with plates of gold: an honourable distinction, first granted to Acilius the consul, after he had subdued, by his arms and counsels, the power of king Antiochus. The ostentation of displaying, of magnifying perhaps, the rent-roll of the estates which they possess in

all the provinces, from the rising to the setting sun, provokes the just resentment of every man who recollects that their poor and invincible ancestors were not distinguished from the meanest of the soldiers by the delicacy of their food or the splendour of their apparel. But the modern nobles measure their rank and consequence according to the loftiness of their chariots and the weighty magnificence of their dress. Their long robes of silk and purple float in the wind ; and, as they are agitated, by art or accident, they occasionally discover the under garments, the rich tunics, embroidered with the figures of various animals. Followed by a train of fifty servants, and tearing up the pavement, they move along the streets with the same impetuous speed as if they travelled with post horses ; and the example of the senators is boldly imitated by the matrons and ladies, whose covered carriages are continually driving round the immense space of the city and suburbs. Whenever these persons of high distinction condescend to visit the public baths, they assume, on their entrance, a tone of loud and insolent command, and appropriate to their own use the conveniences which were designed for the Roman people. If, in these places of mixed and general resort, they meet any of the infamous ministers of their pleasures, they express their affection by a tender embrace ; while they proudly decline the salutations of their fellow citizens, who are not permitted to aspire above the honour of kissing their hands or their knees. As soon as they have indulged themselves in the refreshment of the bath, they resume their rings, and the other ensigns of their dignity ; select from their private wardrobe of the finest linen, such as might suffice for a dozen persons, the garments the most agreeable to their fancy, and maintain till their departure the same haughty demeanour ; which perhaps might have been excused in the great Marcellus, after the conquest of Syracuse. Sometimes, indeed, these heroes undertake more arduous achievements ; they visit their estates in Italy, and procure themselves, by the toil of servile hands, the



amusements of the chase. If at any time, but more especially on a hot day, they have courage to sail, in their painted galleys, from the Lucrine lake to their elegant villas on the sea-coast of Puteoli and Caieta, they compare their own expeditions to the marches of Cæsar and Alexander. Yet should a fly presume to settle on the silken folds of their gilded umbrellas, should a sunbeam penetrate through some unguarded and imperceptible chink, they deplore their intolerable hardships, and lament in affected language that they were not born in the land of the Cimmerians, the regions of eternal darkness. In these journeys into the country the whole body of the household marches with their master. In the same manner as the cavalry and infantry, the heavy and the light armed troops, the advanced guard and the rear, are marshalled by the skill of their military leaders ; so the domestic officers, who bear a rod as an ensign of authority, distribute and arrange the numerous train of slaves and attendants. The baggage and wardrobe move in the front ; and are immediately followed by a multitude of cooks and inferior ministers employed in the service of the kitchens and of the table. The main body is composed of a promiscuous crowd of slaves, increased by the accidental concourse of idle or dependent plebeians. In the exercise of domestic jurisdiction the nobles of Rome express an exquisite sensibility for any personal injury, and a contemptuous indifference for the rest of the human species. When they have called for warm water, if a slave has been tardy in his obedience, he is instantly chastised with three hundred lashes : but should the same slave commit wilful murder, the master will mildly observe that he is a worthless fellow ; but that, if he repeats the offence, he shall not escape punishment. Hospitality was formerly the virtue of the Romans ; and every stranger who could plead either merit or misfortune was relieved or rewarded by their generosity. At present, if a foreigner, perhaps of no contemptible rank, is introduced to one of the proud and wealthy senators, he is welcomed indeed in the first audience,

with such warm professions and such kind inquiries that he retires, enchanted with the affability of his illustrious friend, and full of regret that he had so long delayed his journey to Rome, the native seat of manners as well as of empire. Secure of a favourable reception, he repeats his visit the ensuing day, and is mortified by the discovery that his person, his name, and his country are already forgotten. If he still has resolution to persevere, he is gradually numbered in the train of dependents, and obtains the permission to pay his assiduous and unprofitable court to a haughty patron, incapable of gratitude or friendship ; who scarcely deigns to remark his presence, his departure, or his return. Whenever the rich prepare a solemn and popular entertainment ; whenever they celebrate, with profuse and pernicious luxury, their private banquets ; the choice of the guests is the subject of anxious deliberation. The modest, the sober, and the learned are seldom preferred ; and the nomenclators, who are commonly swayed by interested motives, have the address to insert, in the list of invitations, the obscure names of the most worthless of mankind. But the frequent and familiar companions of the great are those parasites who practise the most useful of all arts, the art of flattery ; who eagerly applaud each word and every action of their immortal patron ; gaze with rapture on his marble columns and variegated pavements ; and strenuously praise the pomp and elegance which he is taught to consider as a part of his personal merit. At the Roman tables the birds, the *squirrels*, or the fish, which appear of an uncommon size, are contemplated with curious attention ; a pair of scales is accurately applied to ascertain their real weight ; and, while the more rational guests are disgusted by the vain and tedious repetition, notaries are summoned to attest by an authentic record the truth of such a marvellous event. Another method of introduction into the houses and society of the great is derived from the profession of gaming, or, as it is more politely styled, of play. The confederates are united by a strict and indisso-

luble bond of friendship, or rather of conspiracy ; a superior degree of skill in the *Tesserarian* art (which may be interpreted the game of dice and tables) is a sure road to wealth and reputation. A master of that sublime science, who in a supper or assembly is placed below a magistrate, displays in his countenance the surprise and indignation which Cato might be supposed to feel when he was refused the prætorship by the votes of a capricious people. The acquisition of knowledge seldom engages the curiosity of the nobles, who abhor the fatigue and disdain the advantages of study ; and the only books which they peruse are the satires of Juvenal, and the verbose and fabulous histories of Marius Maximus. The libraries which they have inherited from their fathers are secluded, like dreary sepulchres, from the light of day. But the costly instruments of the theatre, flutes, and enormous lyres, and hydraulic organs, are constructed for their use ; and the harmony of vocal and instrumental music is incessantly repeated in the palaces of Rome. In those palaces sound is preferred to sense ; and the care of the body to that of the mind. It is allowed as a salutary maxim that the light and frivolous suspicion of a contagious malady is of sufficient weight to excuse the visits of the most intimate friends ; and even the servants who are dispatched to make the decent inquiries are not suffered to return home till they have undergone the ceremony of a previous ablution. Yet this selfish and unmanly delicacy occasionally yields to the more imperious passion of avarice. The prospect of gain will urge a rich and gouty senator as far as Spoleto ; every sentiment of arrogance and dignity is subdued by the hopes of an inheritance, or even of a legacy ; and a wealthy, childless citizen is the most powerful of the Romans. The art of obtaining the signature of a favourable testament, and sometimes of hastening the moment of its execution, is perfectly understood ; and it has happened that in the same house, though in different apartments, a husband and a wife, with the laudable design of over-reaching each other, have summoned their respec-

tive lawyers, to declare, at the same time, their mutual but contradictory intentions. The distress which follows and chastises extravagant luxury often reduces the great to the use of the most humiliating expedients. When they desire to borrow, they employ the base and supplicating style of the slave in the comedy ; but, when they are called upon to pay, they assume the royal and tragic declamation of the grandsons of Hercules. If the demand is repeated, they readily procure some trusty sycophant, instructed to maintain a charge of poison or magic against the insolent creditor ; who is seldom released from prison till he has signed a discharge of the whole debt. These vices, which degrade the moral character of the Romans, are mixed with a puerile superstition that disgraces their understanding. They listen with confidence to the predictions of haruspices, who pretend to read in the entrails of victims the signs of future greatness and prosperity ; and there are many who do not presume either to bathe, or to dine, or to appear in public, till they have diligently consulted, according to the rules of astrology, the situation of Mercury and the aspect of the moon. It is singular enough that this vain credulity may often be discovered among the profane sceptics, who impiously doubt or deny the existence of a celestial power."

In populous cities which are the seat of commerce and manufactures, the middle ranks of inhabitants, who derive their subsistence from the dexterity or labour of their hands, are commonly the most prolific, the most useful, and in that sense the most respectable part of the community. But the plebeians of Rome, who disdained such sedentary and servile arts, had been oppressed from the earliest times, by the weight of debt and usury ; and the husbandman, during the term of his military service, was obliged to abandon the cultivation of his farm. The lands of Italy, which had been originally divided among the families of free and indigent proprietors, were insensibly purchased or usurped by the avarice of the nobles ; and in the age which preceded the fall of the republic it was computed that only two thousand

citizens were possessed of any independent substance. Yet, as long as the people bestowed, by their suffrages, the honours of the state, the command of the legions, and the administration of wealthy provinces, their conscious pride alleviated, in some measure, the hardships of poverty ; and their wants were seasonably supplied by the ambitious liberality of the candidates, who aspired to secure a venal majority in the thirty-five tribes, or the hundred and ninety-three centuries of Rome. But, when the prodigal commons had imprudently alienated not only the *use*, but the *inheritance*, of power, they sunk, under the reign of the Cæsars, into a vile and wretched populace which must, in a few generations, have been totally extinguished, if it had not been continually recruited by the manumission of slaves and the influx of strangers. As early as the time of Hadrian it was the just complaint of the ingenuous natives that the capital had attracted the vices of the universe and the manners of the most opposite nations. The intemperance of the Gauls, the cunning and levity of the Greeks, the savage obstinacy of the Egyptians and Jews, the servile temper of the Asiatics, and the dissolute, effeminate prostitution of the Syrians, were mingled in the various multitude, which, under the proud and false denomination of Romans, presumed to despise their fellow-subjects, and even their sovereigns, who dwelt beyond the precincts of the ETERNAL CITY.

Yet the name of that city was still pronounced with respect : the frequent and capricious tumults of its inhabitants were indulged with impunity ; and the successors of Constantine, instead of crushing the last remains of the democracy by the strong arm of military power, embraced the mild policy of Augustus, and studied to relieve the poverty, and to amuse the idleness, of an innumerable people. I. For the convenience of the lazy plebeians the monthly distributions of corn were converted into a daily allowance of bread ; a great number of ovens was constructed and maintained at the public expense ; and at the

appointed hour each citizen who was furnished with a ticket ascended the flight of steps which had been assigned to his peculiar quarter or division, and received, either as a gift or at a very low price, a loaf of bread of the weight of three pounds for the use of his family. II. The forests of Lucania, whose acorns fattened large droves of wild hogs, afforded, as a species of tribute, a plentiful supply of cheap and wholesome meat. During five months of the year a regular allowance of bacon was distributed to the poorer citizens; and the annual consumption of the capital, at a time when it was much declined from its former lustre, was ascertained by an edict of Valentinian the Third, at three millions six hundred and twenty-eight thousand pounds. III. In the manners of antiquity the use of oil was indispensable for the lamp as well as for the bath; and the annual tax, which was imposed on Africa for the benefit of Rome, amounted to the weight of three millions of pounds, to the measure, perhaps, of three hundred thousand English gallons. IV. The anxiety of Augustus to provide the metropolis with sufficient plenty of corn was not extended beyond that necessary article of human subsistence; and, when the popular clamour accused the dearness and scarcity of wine, a proclamation was issued by the grave reformer to remind his subjects that no man could reasonably complain of thirst since the aqueducts of Agrippa had introduced into the city so many copious streams of pure and salubrious water. This rigid sobriety was insensibly relaxed; and, although the generous design of Aurelian does not appear to have been executed in its full extent, the use of wine was allowed on very easy and liberal terms. The administration of the public cellars was delegated to a magistrate of honourable rank; and a considerable part of the vintage of Campania was reserved for the fortunate inhabitants of Rome.

The stupendous aqueducts, so justly celebrated by the praises of Augustus himself, replenished the *Thermæ*, or baths, which had been constructed in every part of the city.

with Imperial magnificence. The baths of Antoninus Caracalla, which were open, at stated hours, for the indiscriminate service of the senators and the people, contained about sixteen hundred seats of marble; and more than three thousand were reckoned in the baths of Diocletian. The walls of the lofty apartments were covered with curious mosaics, that imitated the art of the pencil in the elegance of design and the variety of colours. The Egyptian granite was beautifully incrustcd with the precious green marble of Numidia; the perpetual stream of hot water was poured into the capacious basins, through so many wide mouths of bright and massy silver; and the meanest Roman could purchase, with a small copper coin, the daily enjoyment of a scene of pomp and luxury, which might excite the envy of the kings of Asia. From these stately palaces issued a swarm of dirty and ragged plebeians, without shoes, and without a mantle; who loitered away whole days in the street or Forum, to hear news, and to hold disputes; who dissipated, in extravagant gaming, the miserable pittance of their wives and children; and spent the hours of the night in obscure taverns and brothels in the indulgence of gross and vulgar sensuality.

But the most lively and splendid amusement of the idle multitude depended on the frequent exhibition of public games and spectacles. The piety of Christian princes had suppressed the inhuman combats of gladiators; but the Roman people still considered the Circus as their home, their temple, and the seat of the republic. The impatient crowd rushed at the dawn of day to secure their places, and there were many who passed a sleepless and anxious night in the adjacent porticos. From the morning to the evening, careless of the sun or of the rain, the spectators, who sometimes amounted to the number of four hundred thousand, remained in eager attention; their eyes fixed on the horses and charioteers, their minds agitated with hope and fear, for the success of the *colours* which they espoused: and the happiness of Rome appeared to hang on the event of a race.

The same immoderate ardour inspired their clamours and their applause, as often as they were entertained with the hunting of wild beasts and the various modes of theatrical representation. These representations in modern capitals may deserve to be considered as a pure and elegant school of taste, and perhaps of virtue. But the Tragic and Comic Muse of the Romans, who seldom aspired beyond the imitation of Attic genius, had been almost totally silent since the fall of the republic; and their place was unworthily occupied by licentious farce, effeminate music, and splendid pageantry. The pantomimes, who maintained their reputation from the age of Augustus to the sixth century, expressed, without the use of words, the various fables of the gods and heroes of antiquity; and the perfection of their art, which sometimes disarmed the gravity of the philosopher, always excited the applause and wonder of the people. The vast and magnificent theatres of Rome were filled by three thousand female dancers, and by three thousand singers, with the masters of the respective choruses. Such was the popular favour which they enjoyed that, in a time of scarcity, when all strangers were banished from the city, the merit of contributing to the public pleasures exempted *them* from a law which was strictly executed against the professors of the liberal arts.



## CHAPTER IV

### *THE SACK OF ROME BY ALARIC*

(A.D. 410)

THE degradation of Attalus removed the only real obstacle to the conclusion of the peace ; and Alaric advanced within three miles of Ravenna, to press the irresolution of the Imperial ministers, whose insolence soon returned with the return of fortune. His indignation was kindled by the report that a rival chieftain, that Sarus, the personal enemy of Adolphus and the hereditary foe of the house of Balti, had been received into the palace. At the head of three hundred followers, that fearless Barbarian immediately sallied from the gates of Ravenna ; surprised, and cut in pieces, a considerable body of Goths ; re-entered the city in triumph ; and was permitted to insult his adversary by the voice of a herald, who publicly declared that the guilt of Alaric had for ever excluded him from the friendship and alliance of the emperor. The crime and folly of the court of Ravenna was expiated a third time by the calamities of Rome. The king of the Goths, who no longer dissembled his appetite for plunder and revenge, appeared in arms under the walls of the capital ; and the trembling senate, without any hopes of relief, prepared, by a desperate resistance, to delay the ruin of their country. But they were unable to guard against the secret conspiracy of their slaves and domestics ; who, either from birth or interest, were attached to the cause of the enemy. At the hour of midnight, the Salarian gate was silently opened, and the inhabitants were awakened by the tremendous sound of

the Gothic trumpet. Eleven hundred and sixty-three years after the foundation of Rome, the Imperial city, which had subdued and civilized so considerable a part of mankind, was delivered to the licentious fury of the tribes of Germany and Scythia.

The proclamation of Alaric, when he forced his entrance into a vanquished city, discovered, however, some regard for the laws of humanity and religion. He encouraged his troops boldly to seize the rewards of valour, and to enrich themselves with the spoils of a wealthy and effeminate people ; but he exhorted them at the same time to spare the lives of the unresisting citizens, and to respect the churches of the apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, as holy and inviolable sanctuaries. Amidst the horrors of a nocturnal tumult, several of the Christian Goths displayed the fervour of a recent conversion ; and some instances of their uncommon piety and moderation are related, and perhaps adorned, by the zeal of ecclesiastical writers. While the Barbarians roamed through the city in quest of prey, the humble dwelling of an aged virgin, who had devoted her life to the service of the altar, was forced open by one of the powerful Goths. He immediately demanded, though in civil language, all the gold and silver in her possession ; and was astonished at the readiness with which she conducted him to a splendid hoard of massy plate, of the richest materials and the most curious workmanship. The Barbarian viewed with wonder and delight this valuable acquisition, till he was interrupted by a serious admonition, addressed to him in the following words : “ These,” said she, “ are the consecrated vessels belonging to St. Peter ; if you presume to touch them, the sacrilegious deed will remain on your conscience. For my part, I dare not keep what I am unable to defend.” The Gothic captain, struck with reverential awe, dispatched a messenger to inform the king of the treasure which he had discovered ; and received a peremptory order from Alaric that all the consecrated plate and ornaments should be transported, without damage

on delay, to the church of the apostle. From the extremity, perhaps, of the Quirinal hill to the distant quarter of the Vatican, a numerous detachment of Goths, marching in order of battle through the principal streets, protected, with glittering arms, the long train of their devout companions, who bore aloft, on their heads, the sacred vessels of gold and silver ; and the martial shouts of the Barbarians were mingled with the sound of religious psalmody. From all the adjacent houses, a crowd of Christians hastened to join this edifying procession ; and a multitude of fugitives, without distinction of age, or rank, or even of sect, had the good fortune to escape to the secure and hospitable sanctuary of the Vatican. The learned work, concerning the *City of God*, was professedly composed by St. Augustin, to justify the ways of Providence in the destruction of the Roman greatness. He celebrates with peculiar satisfaction this memorable triumph of Christ ; and insults his adversaries by challenging them to produce some similar example of a town taken by storm in which the fabulous gods of antiquity had been able to protect either themselves or their deluded votaries.

In the sack of Rome, some rare and extraordinary examples of Barbarian virtue have been deservedly applauded. But the holy precincts of the Vatican and the apostolic churches could receive a very small proportion of the Roman people : many thousand warriors, more especially of the Huns, who served under the standard of Alaric, were strangers to the name, or at least to the faith, of Christ ; and we may suspect, without any breach of charity or candour, that in the hour of savage licence, when every passion was inflamed and every restraint was removed, the precepts of the gospel seldom influenced the behaviour of the Gothic Christians. The writers, the best disposed to exaggerate their clemency, have freely confessed that a cruel slaughter was made of the Romans ; and that the streets of the city were filled with dead bodies, which remained without burial during the general consternation.

The despair of the citizens was sometimes converted into fury ; and, whenever the Barbarians were provoked by opposition, they extended the promiscuous massacre to the feeble, the innocent, and the helpless. The private revenge of forty thousand slaves was exercised without pity or remorse ; and the ignominious lashes, which they had formerly received, were washed away in the blood of the guilty, or obnoxious, families. A Roman lady of singular beauty and orthodox faith had excited the impatient desires of a young Goth, who, according to the sagacious remark of Sozomen, was attached to the Arian heresy. Exasperated by her obstinate resistance, he drew his sword, and, with the anger of a lover, slightly wounded her neck. The bleeding heroine still continued to brave his resentment and to repel his love, till the ravisher desisted from his unavailing efforts, respectfully conducted her to the sanctuary of the Vatican, and gave six pieces of gold to the guards of the church, on condition that they should restore her inviolate to the arms of her husband. Such instances of courage and generosity were not extremely common. But avarice is an insatiate and universal passion ; since the enjoyment of almost every object that can afford pleasure to the different tastes and tempers of mankind may be procured by the possession of wealth. In the pillage of Rome, a just preference was given to gold and jewels, which contain the greatest value in the smallest compass and weight ; but, after these portable riches had been removed by the more diligent robbers, the palaces of Rome were rudely stripped of their splendid and costly furniture. The sideboards of massy plate, and the variegated wardrobes of silk and purple, were irregularly piled in the waggons that always followed the march of a Gothic army. The most exquisite works of art were roughly handled or wantonly destroyed : many a statue was melted for the sake of the precious materials ; and many a vase, in the division of the spoil, was shattered into fragments by the stroke of a battle-axe. The acquisition of riches served

only to stimulate the avarice of the rapacious Barbarians, who proceeded by threats, by blows, and by tortures, to force from their prisoners the confession of hidden treasure. Visible splendour and expense were alleged as the proof of a plentiful fortune; the appearance of poverty was imputed to a parsimonious disposition; and the obstinacy of some misers, who endured the most cruel torments before they would discover the secret object of their affection, was fatal to many unhappy wretches, who expired under the lash for refusing to reveal their imaginary treasures. The edifices of Rome, though the damage has been much exaggerated, received some injury from the violence of the Goths. At their entrance through the Salarian gate, they fired the adjacent houses, to guide their march and to distract the attention of the citizens: the flames, which encountered no obstacle in the disorder of the night, consumed many private and public buildings; and the ruins of the palace of Sallust remained in the age of Justinian, a stately monument of the Gothic conflagration. Yet a contemporary historian has observed that fire could scarcely consume the enormous beams of solid brass, and that the strength of man was insufficient to subvert the foundations of ancient structures. Some truth may possibly be concealed in his devout assertion that the wrath of Heaven supplied the imperfections of hostile rage, and that the proud Forum of Rome decorated with the statues of so many gods and heroes, was levelled in the dust by the stroke of lightning.

Whatever might be the numbers, of equestrian or plebeian rank, who perished in the massacre of Rome, it is confidently affirmed that only one senator lost his life by the sword of the enemy. But it is not easy to compute the multitudes, who, from an honourable station and a prosperous fortune, were suddenly reduced to the miserable condition of captives and exiles. As the Barbarians had more occasion for money than for slaves, they fixed at a moderate price the redemption of their indigent prisoners;

and the ransom was often paid by the benevolence of their friends or the charity of strangers. The captives, who were regularly sold, either in open market or by private contract, would have legally regained their native freedom, which it was impossible for a citizen to lose or to alienate. But, as it was soon discovered that the vindication of their liberty would endanger their lives, and that the Goths, unless they were tempted to sell, might be provoked to murder, their useless prisoners, the civil jurisprudence had been already qualified by a wise regulation that they should be obliged to serve the moderate term of five years, till they had discharged by their labour the price of their redemption. The nations who invaded the Roman empire had driven before them, into Italy, whole troops of hungry and affrighted provincials, less apprehensive of servitude than of famine. The calamities of Rome and Italy dispersed the inhabitants to the most lonely, the most secure, the most distant places of refuge. While the Gothic cavalry spread terror and desolation along the sea-coast of Campania and Tuscany, the little Island of Igilium, separated by a narrow channel from the Argentarian promontory, repulsed, or eluded, their hostile attempts ; and, at so small a distance from Rome, great numbers of citizens were securely concealed in the thick woods of that sequestered spot. The ample patrimonies, which many senatorian families possessed in Africa, invited them, if they had time and prudence, to escape from the ruin of their country, to embrace the shelter of that hospitable province. The most illustrious of these fugitives was the noble and pious Proba, the widow of the præfect Petronius. After the death of her husband, the most powerful subject of Rome, she had remained at the head of the Anician family, and successively supplied, from her private fortune, the expense of the consulships of her three sons. When the city was besieged and taken by the Goths, Proba supported, with Christian resignation, the loss of immense riches ; embarked in a small vessel, from whence she beheld, at sea, the flames of her

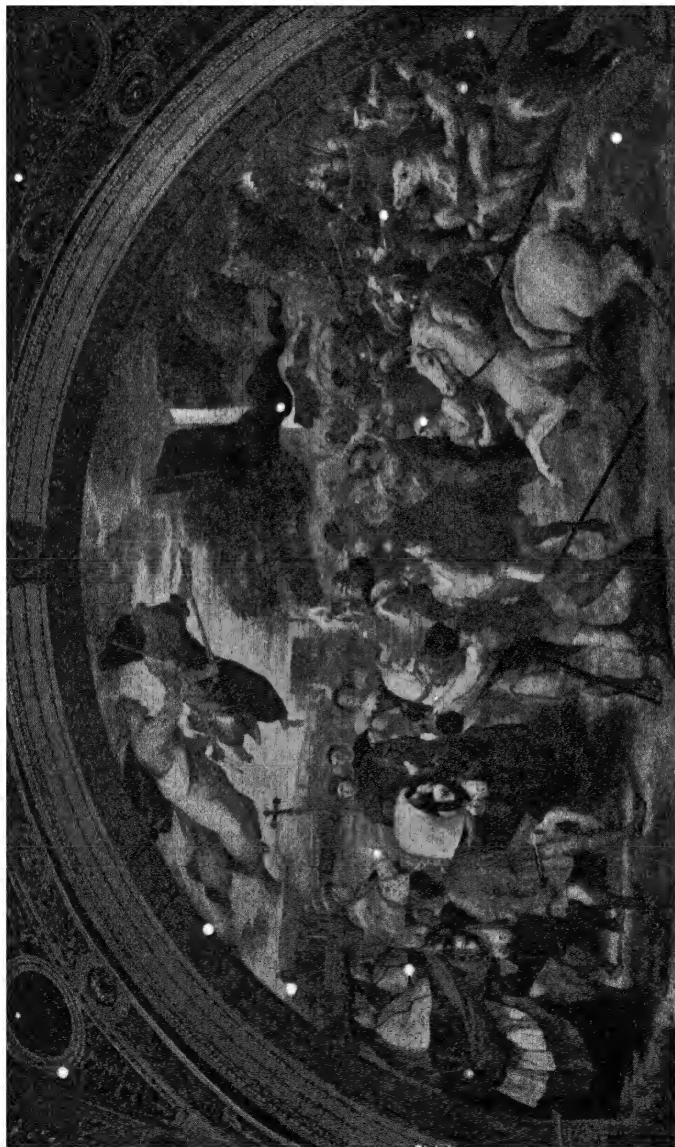
burning palace ; and fled with her daughter Læta, and her grand-daughter, the celebrated virgin Demetrias, to the coast of Africa. The benevolent profusion with which the patron distributed the fruits, or the price, of her estates contributed to alleviate the misfortunes of exile and captivity. But even the family of Proba herself was not exempt from the rapacious oppression of Count Heraclian, who basely sold, in matrimonial prostitution, the noblest maidens of Rome to the lust or avarice of the Syrian merchants. The Italian fugitives were dispersed through the provinces, along the coast of Egypt and Asia, as far as Constantinople and Jerusalem ; and the village of Bethlem, the solitary residence of St. Jerom and his female converts, was crowded with illustrious beggars of either sex and every age, who excited the public compassion by the remembrance of their past fortune. This awful catastrophe of Rome filled the astonished empire with grief and terror. So interesting a contrast of greatness and ruin disposed the fond credulity of the people to deplore, and even to exaggerate, the afflictions of the queen of cities. The clergy, who applied to recent events the lofty metaphors of Oriental prophecy, were sometimes tempted to confound the destruction of the capital and the dissolution of the globe.

There exists in human nature a strong propensity to depreciate the advantages, and to magnify the evils, of the present times. Yet, when the first emotions had subsided, and a fair estimate was made of the real damage, the more learned and judicious contemporaries were forced to confess that infant Rome had formerly received more essential injury from the Gauls than she had now sustained from the Goths in her declining age. The experience of eleven centuries has enabled posterity to produce a much more singular parallel ; and to affirm with confidence that the ravages of the Barbarians, whom Alaric had led from the banks of the Danube, were less destructive than the hostilities exercised by the troops of Charles the Fifth, a Catholic prince, who styled himself Emperor of the Romans. The

Goths evacuated the city at the end of six days, but Rome remained above nine months in the possession of the Imperialists ; and every hour was stained by some atrocious act of cruelty, lust, and rapine. The authority of Alaric preserved some order and moderation among the ferocious multitude, which acknowledged him for their leader and king ; but the constable of Bourbon had gloriously fallen in the attack on the walls ; and the death of the general removed every restraint of discipline from an army which consisted of three independent nations, the Italians, the Spaniards, and the Germans. In the beginning of the sixteenth century, the manners of Italy exhibited a remarkable scene of the depravity of mankind. They united the sanguinary crimes that prevail in an unsettled state of society, with the polished vices that spring from the abuse of art and luxury ; and the loose adventurers, who had violated every prejudice of patriotism and superstition to assault the palace of the Roman pontiff, must deserve to be considered as the most profligate of the *Italians*. At the same era, the *Spaniards* were the terror both of the Old and New World ; but their high-spirited valour was disgraced by gloomy pride, rapacious avarice, and unrelenting cruelty. Indefatigable in the pursuit of fame and riches, they had improved, by repeated practice, the most exquisite and effectual methods of torturing their prisoners ; many of the Castilians, who pillaged Rome, were familiars of the holy inquisition ; and some volunteers, perhaps, were lately returned from the conquest of Mexico. The *Germans* were less corrupt than the Italians, less cruel than the Spaniards ; and the rustic, or even savage, aspect of those *Tramontane* warriors often disguised a simple and merciful disposition. But they had imbibed, in the first fervour of the reformation, the spirit, as well as the principles, of Luther. It was their favourite amusement to insult or destroy the consecrated objects of Catholic superstition ; they indulged, without pity or remorse, a devout hatred against the clergy of every denomination and degree, who form so considerable



a part of the inhabitants of modern Rome ; and their fanatic zeal might aspire to subvert the throne of Antichrist, to purify, with blood and fire, the abominations of the spiritual Babylon.



*Photo : Anderson.*

MEETING OF ATTLA AND POPE LEO I  
(*From the Painting by Raffael at the Vatican, Rome*)

## CHAPTER V

### *THE COURT OF ATTLA*

(444—453 A.D.)

[INTRODUCTION.—Mention has already been made of the crossing of the Volga by the Huns in 375 A.D. The Huns (the kinsmen of the Hunas who devastated Northern India at about the same time) were a wild and repulsive Central Asian tribe. They drove the Goths before them, and settled in the country between the Danube and the Volga. In 444, Attila became their king. He was rightly called "the Scourge of God." In 450 he invaded Western Europe and "where the hoofs of his horse trod, grass grew no more." He was defeated in a colossal battle at Châlons on the Marne in 451 by the Visigoths, but Theodoric fell in the hour of victory. In 453, he attacked Rome, but was persuaded to spare it by Pope Leo the Great. He was one of the most remarkable of all the barbarian conquerors who threatened the Eternal City.]

As far as we may ascertain the vague and obscure geography of Priscus, this capital appears to have been seated between the Danube, the Theiss, and the Carpathian hills, in the plains of Upper Hungary, and most probably in the neighbourhood of Jazberin, Agria, or Tokay. In its origin it could be no more than an accidental camp, which, by the long and frequent residence of Attila, had insensibly swelled into a huge village, for the reception of his court, of the troops who followed his person, and of the various multitude of idle or industrious slaves and retainers. The baths, constructed by Onegesius, were the only edifice of stone; the materials had been transported from Pannonia; and, since the adjacent country was destitute even of large timber, it may be presumed that the meaner habitations of the royal village consisted of straw, of mud, or of canvas. The wooden houses of the more illustrious Huns were built

and adorned with rude magnificence, according to the rank the fortune, or the taste of the proprietors. They seem to have been distributed with some degree of order and symmetry; and each spot became more honourable, as it approached the person of the sovereign. The palace of Attila, which surpassed all other houses in his dominions, was built entirely of wood, and covered an ample space of ground. The outward enclosure was a lofty wall, or palisade of smooth square timber, intersected with high towers, but intended rather for ornament than defence. This wall, which seems to have encircled the declivity of a hill, comprehended a great variety of wooden edifices, adapted to the uses of royalty. A separate house was assigned to each of the numerous wives of Attila; and, instead of the rigid and illiberal confinement imposed by Asiatic jealousy, they politely admitted the Roman ambassadors to their presence, their table, and even to the freedom of an innocent embrace. When Maximin offered his presents to Cerca, the principal queen, he admired the singular architecture of her mansion, the height of the round columns, the size and beauty of the wood, which was curiously shaped, or turned, or polished, or carved; and his attentive eye was able to discover some taste in the ornaments, and some regularity in the proportions. After passing through the guards who watched before the gate, the ambassadors were introduced into the private apartment of Cerca. The wife of Attila received their visit sitting, or rather lying, on a soft couch; the floor was covered with a carpet; the domestics formed a circle round the queen; and her damsels, seated on the ground, were employed in working the variegated embroidery which adorned the dress of the Barbaric warriors. The Huns were ambitious of displaying those riches which were the fruit and evidence of their victories: the trappings of their horses, their swords, and even their shoes, were studded with gold and precious stones; and their tables were profusely spread with plates, and goblets, and vases of gold and silver, which

had been fashioned by the labour of Grecian artists. The monarch alone assumed the superior pride of still adhering to the simplicity of his Scythian ancestors. The dress of Attila, his arms, and the furniture of his horse were plain, without ornament, and of a single colour. The royal table was served in wooden cups and platters; flesh was his only food; and the conqueror of the North never tasted the luxury of bread.

When Attila first gave audience to the Roman ambassadors on the banks of the Danube, his tent was encompassed with a formidable guard. The monarch himself was seated in a wooden chair. His stern countenance, angry gestures, and impatient tone astonished the firmness of Maximin; but Vigilius had more reason to tremble, since he distinctly understood the menace that, if Attila did not respect the law of nations, he would nail the deceitful interpreter to a cross and leave his body to the vultures. The Barbarian condescended, by producing an accurate list, to expose the bold falsehood of Vigilius, who had affirmed that no more than seventeen deserters could be found. But he arrogantly declared that he apprehended only the disgrace of contending with his fugitive slaves; since he despised their impotent efforts to defend the provinces which Theodosius had entrusted to their arms: "For what fortress" (added Attila), "what city, in the wide extent of the Roman Empire, can hope to exist, secure and impregnable, if it is our pleasure that it should be erased from the earth?" He dismissed, however, the interpreter, who returned to Constantinople with his peremptory demand of more complete restitution and a more splendid embassy. His anger gradually subsided, and his domestic satisfaction in a marriage which he celebrated on the road with the daughter of Eslam might perhaps contribute to mollify the native fierceness of his temper. The entrance of Attila into the royal village was marked by a very singular ceremony. A numerous troop of women came out to meet their hero, and their king. They marched before him,

distributed into long and regular files ; the intervals between the files were filled by white veils of thin linen, which the women on either side bore aloft in their hands, and which formed a canopy for a chorus of young virgins, who chanted hymns and songs in the Scythian language. The wife of his favourite Onegesius, with a train of female attendants, saluted Attila at the door of her own house, on his way to the palace ; and offered, according to the custom of the country, her respectful homage, by entreating him to taste the wine and meat which she had prepared for his reception. As soon as the monarch had graciously accepted her hospitable gift, his domestics lifted a small silver table to a convenient height, as he sat on horseback ; and Attila, when he had touched the goblet with his lips, again saluted the wife of Onegesius, and continued his march. During his residence at the seat of empire, his hours were not wasted in the recluse idleness of a seraglio ; and the king of the Huns could maintain his superior dignity, without concealing his person from the public view. He frequently assembled his council, and gave audience to the ambassadors of the nations ; and his people might appeal to the supreme tribunal, which he held at stated times, and, according to the eastern custom, before the principal gate of his wooden palace. The Romans, both of the East and of the West, were twice invited to the banquets, where Attila feasted with the princes and nobles of Scythia. Maximin and his colleagues were stopped on the threshold, till they had made a devout libation to the health and prosperity of the king of the Huns ; and were conducted, after this ceremony, to their respective seats in a spacious hall. The royal table and couch, covered with carpets and fine linen, was raised by several steps in the midst of the hall ; and a son, an uncle, or perhaps a favourite king, were admitted to share the simple and homely repast of Attila. Two lines of small tables, each of which contained three or four guests, were ranged in order on either hand ; the right was esteemed the most honourable, but the

ROMANS ingenuously confess that they were placed on the left ; and that Beric, an unknown chieftain, most probably of the Gothic race, preceded the representatives of Theodosius and Valentinian. The Barbarian monarch received from his cup-bearer a goblet filled with wine, and courteously drank to the health of the most distinguished guest, who rose from his seat and expressed, in the same manner, his loyal and respectful vows. This ceremony was successively performed for all, or at least for the illustrious persons of the assembly ; and a considerable time must have been consumed, since it was thrice repeated, as each course or service was placed on the table. But the wine still remained after the meat had been removed ; and the Huns continued to indulge their intemperance long after the sober and decent ambassadors of the two empires had withdrawn themselves from the nocturnal banquet. Yet before they retired, they enjoyed a singular opportunity of observing the manners of the nation in their convivial amusements. Two Scythians stood before the couch of Attila, and recited the verses which they had composed, to celebrate his valour and his victories. A profound silence prevailed in the hall ; and the attention of the guests was captivated by the vocal harmony, which revived and perpetuated the memory of their own exploits : a martial ardour flashed from the eyes of the warriors, who were impatient for battle ; and the tears of the old men expressed their generous despair that they could no longer partake the danger and glory of the field. This entertainment, which might be considered as a school of military virtue, was succeeded by a farce that debased the dignity of human nature. A Moorish and<sup>2</sup>a Scythian buffoon successively excited the mirth of the rude spectators, by their deformed figure, ridiculous dress, antic gestures, absurd speeches, and the strange unintelligible confusion of the Latin, the Gothic, and the Hunnic languages ; and the hall resounded with loud and licentious peals of laughter. In the midst of this intemperate riot, Attila alone, without

a change of countenance, maintained his steadfast and inflexible gravity ; which was never relaxed, except on the entrance of Irnac, the youngest of his sons : he embraced the boy with a smile of paternal tenderness, gently pinched him by the cheek, and betrayed a partial affection, which was justified by the assurance of his prophets that Irnac would be the future support of his family and empire. Two days afterwards, the ambassadors received a second invitation ; and they had reason to praise the politeness as well as the hospitality of Attila. The king of the Huns held a long and familiar conversation with Maximin ; but his civility was interrupted by rude expressions, and haughty reproaches ; and he was provoked, by a motive of interest, to support, with unbecoming zeal, the private claims of his secretary Constantius. “ The emperor ” (said Attila) “ has long promised him a rich wife ; Constantius must not be disappointed ; nor should a Roman emperor deserve the name of liar.” On the third day, the ambassadors were dismissed ; the freedom of several captives was granted, for a moderate ransom, to their pressing entreaties ; and, besides the royal presents, they were permitted to accept from each of the Scythian nobles the honourable and useful gift of a horse. Maximin returned, by the same road, to Constantinople ; and though he was involved in an accidental dispute with Beric, the new ambassador of Attila, he flattered himself that he had contributed, by the laborious journey, to confirm the peace and alliance of the two nations.



## CHAPTER VI

### *THE BATTLE OF CHÂLONS*

(451 A.D.)

THE facility with which Attila had penetrated into the heart of Gaul may be ascribed to his insidious policy as well as to the terror of his arms. His public declarations were skilfully mitigated by his private assurances ; he alternately soothed and threatened the Romans and the Goths ; and the courts of Ravenna and Toulouse, mutually suspicious of each other's intentions, beheld with supine indifference the approach of their common enemy. Aetius was the sole guardian of the public safety ; but his wisest measures were embarrassed by a faction which, since the death of Placidia, infested the Imperial palace ; the youth of Italy trembled at the sound of the trumpet ; and the Barbarians who, from fear or affection, were inclined to the cause of Attila awaited, with doubtful and venal faith, the event of the war. The patrician passed the Alps at the head of some troops, whose strength and numbers scarcely deserved the name of an army. But on his arrival at Arles, or Lyons, he was confounded by the intelligence that the Visigoths, refusing to embrace the defence of Gaul, had determined to expect, within their own territories, the formidable invader, whom they professed to despise. The senator Avitus, who, after the honourable exercise of the prætorian Præfecture, had retired to his estate in Auvergne, was persuaded to accept the important embassy, which he executed with ability and success. He represented to Theodoric that an ambitious conqueror, who aspired to the dominion of the earth, could be resisted only by the firm

and unanimous alliance of the powers whom he laboured to oppress. The lively eloquence of Avitus inflamed the Gothic warriors, by the description of the injuries which their ancestors had suffered from the Huns; whose implacable fury still pursued them from the Danube to the foot of the Pyrenees. He strenuously urged that it was the duty of every Christian to save from sacrilegious violation the churches of God and the relics of the saints; that it was the interest of every Barbarian who had acquired a settlement in Gaul to defend the fields and vineyards, which were cultivated for his use, against the desolation of the Scythian shepherds. Theodoric yielded to the evidence of truth; adopted the measure at once the most prudent and the most honourable; and declared that, as the faithful ally of Aetius and the Romans, he was ready to expose his life and kingdom for the common safety of Gaul. The Visigoths, who at that time were in the mature vigour of their fame and power, obeyed with alacrity the signal of war, prepared their arms and horses, and assembled under the standard of their aged king, who was resolved, with his two eldest sons, Torismond and Theodoric, to command in person his numerous and valiant people. The example of the Goths determined several tribes or nations that seemed to fluctuate between the Huns and the Romans. The indefatigable diligence of the patrician gradually collected the troops of Gaul and Germany, who had formerly acknowledged themselves the subjects or soldiers of the republic, but who now claimed the rewards of voluntary service and the rank of independent allies; the Læti, the Armoricans, the Breones, the Saxons, the Burgundians, the Sarmatians or Alani, the Ripuarians, and the Franks who followed Meroveus as their lawful prince. Such was the various army, which, under the conduct of Aetius and Theodoric, advanced, by rapid marches, to relieve Orleans, and to give battle to the innumerable host of Attila.

On their approach the king of the Huns immediately raised the siege, and sounded a retreat to recall the fore-

most of his troops from the pillage of a city which they had already entered. The valour of Attila was always guided by his prudence ; and, as he foresaw the fatal consequences of a defeat in the heart of Gaul, he repassed the Seine and expected the enemy in the plains of Châlons, whose smooth and level surface was adapted to the operations of his Scythian cavalry. But in this tumultuary retreat the vanguard of the Romans and their allies continually pressed, and sometimes engaged the troops whom Attila had posted in the rear ; the hostile columns, in the darkness of the night, and the perplexity of the roads, might encounter each other without design ; and the bloody conflict of the Franks and Gepidæ, in which fifteen thousand Barbarians were slain, was a prelude to a more general and decisive action. The Catalaunian fields spread themselves round Châlons, and extend, according to the vague measurement of Jornandes, to the length of one hundred and fifty, and the breadth of one hundred, miles, over the whole province, which is intitled to the appellation of a *champaign* country. This spacious plain was distinguished, however, by some inequalities of ground ; and the importance of an height, which commanded the camp of Attila, was understood, and disputed, by the two generals. The young and valiant Torismond first occupied the summit ; the Goths rushed with irresistible weight on the Huns, who laboured to ascend from the opposite side ; and the possession of this advantageous post inspired both the troops and their leaders with a fair assurance of victory. The anxiety of Attila prompted him to consult his priests and haruspices. It was reported that, after scrutinizing the entrails of victims and scraping their bones, they revealed, in mysterious language, his own defeat, with the death of his principal adversary ; and that the Barbarian, by accepting the equivalent, expressed his involuntary esteem for the superior merit of Aetius. But the unusual despondency, which seemed to prevail among the Huns, engaged Attila to use the expedient, so familiar to the generals of antiquity, of animating his troops by a

military oration ; and his language was that of a king who had often fought and conquered at their head. He pressed them to consider their past glory, their actual danger, and their future hopes. The same fortune which opened the deserts and morasses of Scythia to their unarmed valour, which had laid so many warlike nations prostrate at their feet, had reserved the joys of this memorable field for the consummation of their victories. The cautious steps of their enemies, their strict alliance, and their advantageous posts, he artfully represented as the effects, not of prudence, but of fear. The Visigoths alone were the strength and nerves of the opposite army ; and the Huns might securely trample on the degenerate Romans, whose close and compact order betrayed their apprehensions, and who were equally incapable of supporting the dangers or the fatigues of a day of battle. The doctrine of predestination, so favourable to martial virtue, was carefully inculcated by the king of the Huns, who assured his subjects that the warriors, protected by Heaven, were safe and invulnerable amidst the darts of the enemy ; but that the unerring Fates would strike their victims in the bosom of inglorious peace. " I myself," continued Attila, " will throw the first javelin, and the wretch who refuses to imitate the example of his sovereign is devoted to inevitable death." The spirit of the Barbarians was rekindled by the presence, the voice, and the example, of their intrepid leader ; and Attila, yielding to their impatience, immediately formed his order of battle. At the head of his brave and faithful Huns he occupied in person the centre of the line. The nations subject to his empire, the Rugians, the Heruli, the Thuringians, the Franks, the Burgundians, were extended, on either hand, over the ample space of the Catalaunian fields ; the right wing was commanded by Ardaric, king of the Gepidæ ; and the three valiant brothers who reigned over the Ostrogoths were posted on the left to oppose the kindred tribes of the Visigoths. The disposition of the allies was regulated by a different principle. Sangiban, the faithless king of the

Alari, was placed in the centre ; where his motions might be strictly watched, and his treachery might be instantly punished. Aetius assumed the command of the left, and Theodoric of the right wing ; while Torismond still continued to occupy the heights which appear to have stretched on the flank, and perhaps the rear, of the Scythian army. The nations from the Volga to the Atlantic were assembled on the plain of Châlons ; but many of these nations had been divided by faction, or conquest, or emigration ; and the appearance of similar arms and ensigns, which threatened each other, presented the image of a civil war.

The discipline and tactics of the Greeks and Romans form an interesting part of their national manners. The attentive study of the military operations of Xenophon, or Cæsar, or Frederic, when they are described by the same genius which conceived and executed them, may tend to improve (if such improvement can be wished) the art of destroying the human species. But the battle of Châlons can only excite our curiosity by the magnitude of the object ; since it was decided by the blind impetuosity of Barbarians, and has been related by partial writers, whose civil or ecclesiastical profession secluded them from the knowledge of military affairs. Cassiodorius, however, had familiarly conversed with many Gothic warriors, who served in that memorable engagement ; “ a conflict,” as they informed him, “ fierce, various, obstinate and bloody ; such as could not be paralleled either in the present or in past ages.” The number of the slain amounted to one hundred and sixty-two thousand, or, according to another account, three hundred thousand persons ; and these incredible exaggerations suppose a real and effective loss, sufficient to justify the historian’s remark that whole generations may be swept away, by the madness of kings, in the space of a single hour. After the mutual and repeated discharge of missile weapons, in which the archers of Scythia might signalize their superior dexterity, the cavalry and infantry of the two armies were furiously mingled in closer

combat. The Huns, who fought under the eyes of their king, pierced through the feeble and doubtful centre of the allies, separated their wings from each other, and wheeling, with a rapid effort, to the left, directed their whole force against the Visigoths. As Theodoric rode along the ranks to animate his troops, he received a mortal stroke from the javelin of Andages, a noble Ostrogoth, and immediately fell from his horse. The wounded king was oppressed in the general disorder, and trampled under the feet of his own cavalry ; and this important death served to explain the ambiguous prophecy of the haruspices. Attila already exulted in the confidence of victory, when the valiant Torismond descended from the hills, and verified the remainder of the prediction. The Visigoths, who had been thrown into confusion by the flight, or defection, of the Alani, gradually restored their order of battle ; and the Huns were undoubtedly vanquished, since Attila was compelled to retreat. He had exposed his person with the rashness of a private soldier ; but the intrepid troops of the centre had pushed forwards beyond the rest of the line ; their attack was faintly supported ; their flanks were unguarded ; and the conquerors of Scythia and Germany were saved by the approach of the night from a total defeat. They retired within a circle of waggons that fortified their camp ; and the dismounted squadrons prepared themselves for a defence, to which neither their arms nor their temper were adapted. The event was doubtful ; but Attila had secured a last and honourable resource. The saddles and rich furniture of the cavalry were collected by his order into a funeral pile ; and the magnanimous Barbarian had resolved, if his intrenchments should be forced, to rush headlong into the flames, and to deprive his enemies of the glory which they might have acquired by the death or captivity of Attila.

But his enemies had passed the night in equal disorder and anxiety. The inconsiderate courage of Torismond was tempted to urge the pursuit, till he unexpectedly found himself, with a few followers, in the midst of the Scythian

waggon. In the confusion of a nocturnal combat, he was thrown from his horse; and the Gothic prince must have perished like his father, if his youthful strength, and the intrepid zeal of his companions, had not rescued him from this dangerous situation. In the same manner, but on the left of the line, Aetius himself, separated from his allies, ignorant of their victory, and anxious for their fate, encountered and escaped the hostile troops that were scattered over the plains of Châlons; and at length reached the camp of the Goths, which he could only fortify with a slight rampart of shields, till the dawn of day. The Imperial general was soon satisfied of the defeat of Attila, who still remained inactive within his intrenchments; and, when he contemplated the bloody scene, he observed, with secret satisfaction, that the loss had principally fallen on the Barbarians. The body of Theodoric, pierced with honourable wounds, was discovered under a heap of the slain: his subjects bewailed the death of their king and father; but their tears were mingled with songs and acclamations, and his funeral rites were performed in the face of a vanquished enemy. The Goths, clashing their arms, elevated on a buckler his eldest son Torismond, to whom they justly ascribed the glory of their success; and the new king accepted the obligation of revenge as a sacred portion of his paternal inheritance. Yet the Goths themselves were astonished by the fierce and undaunted aspect of their formidable antagonist; and their historian has compared Attila to a lion encompassed in his den, and threatening his hunters with redoubled fury. The kings and nations, who might have deserted his standard in the hour of distress, were made sensible that the displeasure of their monarch, was the most imminent and inevitable danger. All his instruments of martial music incessantly sounded a loud and animating strain of defiance; and the foremost troops who advanced to the assault were checked, or destroyed, by showers of arrows from every side of the intrenchments. It was determined in a general council of war, to besiege the

king of the Huns in his camp, to intercept his provisions, and to reduce him to the alternative of a disgraceful treaty or an unequal combat. But the impatience of the Barbarians soon disdained these cautious and dilatory measures ; and the mature policy of Aetius was apprehensive that, after the extirpation of the Huns, the republic would be oppressed by the pride and power of the Gothic nation. The patrician exerted the superior ascendant of authority and reason, to calm the passions which the son of Theodoric considered as a duty ; represented, with seeming affection, and real truth, the dangers of absence and delay ; and persuaded Torismond to disappoint, by his speedy return, the ambitious designs of his brothers, who might occupy the throne and treasures of Toulouse. After the departure of the Goths and the separation of the allied army, Attila was surprised at the vast silence that reigned over the plains of Châlons ; the suspicion of some hostile stratagem detained him several days within the circle of his waggons ; and his retreat beyond the Rhine confessed the last victory which was achieved in the name of the Western empire. Meroveus and his Franks, observing a prudent distance, and magnifying the opinion of their strength by the numerous fires which they kindled every night, continued to follow the rear of the Huns, till they reached the confines of Thuringia. The Thuringians served in the army of Attila ; they traversed, both in their march and in their return, the territories of the Franks ; and it was perhaps in this war that they exercised the cruelties which, about fourscore years afterwards, were revenged by the son of Clovis. They massacred their hostages, as well as their captives : two hundred young maidens were tortured with exquisite and unrelenting rage ; their bodies were torn asunder by wild horses, or their bones were crushed under the weight of rolling waggons ; and their unburied limbs were abandoned on the public roads, as a prey to dogs and vultures. Such were those savage ancestors, whose imaginary virtues have sometimes excited the praise and envy of civilised ages.



## CHAPTER VII

### BOETHIUS

(475—525 A.D.)

[INTRODUCTION.—Boethius has been given the oft-bestowed title of the “last of the Romans.” In 487, the Ostrogothic king Theodoric swooped down with his hordes upon Rome. In his youth he had acquired at Constantinople a veneer of culture, and he had done much to civilize his semi-barbarous subjects. At his court dwelt Cassiodorus, Boethius, and other men of letters. But Theodoric was an ardent champion of the Arian heresy, while Boethius was a Catholic. Accordingly, Boethius, Symmachus and others were seized and thrown into prison, and afterwards cruelly executed. Theodoric died, it is said, of remorse: he saw in the head of a fish served at the royal table the angry countenance of Symmachus. The *Consolations of Philosophy*, composed by Boethius while awaiting his doom, is a masterpiece worthy to rank with the *Apology of Socrates* and the *Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*: it was immensely popular in the Middle Ages and was many times translated.]

THE senator Boethius is the last of the Romans whom Cato or Tully could have acknowledged for their countryman. As a wealthy orphan, he inherited the patrimony and honours of the Anician family, a name ambitiously assumed by the kings and emperors of the age; and the appellation of Manlius asserted his genuine or fabulous descent from a race of consuls and dictators, who had repulsed the Gauls from the Capitol and sacrificed their sons to the discipline of the republic. In the youth of Boethius, the studies of Rome were not totally abandoned; a Virgil is now extant, corrected by the hand of a consul; and the professors of grammar, rhetoric, and jurisprudence, were maintained in their privileges and pensions by the liberality of the Goths. But the erudition of the Latin language was insufficient to

satiate his ardent curiosity ; and Boethius is said to have employed eighteen laborious years in the schools of Athens, which were supported by the zeal, the learning, and the diligence of Proclus and his disciples. The reason and piety of their Roman pupil were fortunately saved from the contagion of mystery and magic, which polluted the groves of the academy ; but he imbibed the spirit, and imitated the method, of his dead and living masters, who attempted to reconcile the strong and subtle sense of Aristotle with the devout contemplation and sublime fancy of Plato. After his return to Rome and his marriage with the daughter of his friend, the patrician Symmachus, Boethius still continued, in a palace of ivory and marble, to prosecute the same studies. The church was edified by his profound defence of the orthodox creed against the Arian, the Eutychian, and the Nestorian heresies ; and the Catholic unity was explained or exposed in a formal treatise by the *indifference* of three distinct though consubstantial persons. For the benefit of his Latin readers, his genius submitted to teach the first elements of the arts and sciences of Greece. The geometry of Euclid, the music of Pythagoras, the arithmetic of Nicomachus, the mechanics of Archimedes, the astronomy of Ptolemy, the theology of Plato, and the logic of Aristotle, with the commentary of Porphyry, were translated and illustrated by the indefatigable pen of the Roman senator. And he alone was esteemed capable of describing the wonders of art, a sun-dial, a water-clock, or a sphere which represented the motions of the planets. From these abstruse speculations, Boethius stooped, or, to speak more truly, he rose to the social duties of public and private life : the indigent were relieved by his liberality ; and his eloquence, which flattery might compare to the voice of Demosthenes or Cicero, was uniformly exerted in the cause of innocence and humanity. Such conspicuous merit was felt and rewarded by a discerning prince ; the dignity of Boethius was adorned with the titles of consul and patrician, and his talents were usefully employed in the

important station of master of the offices. Notwithstanding the equal claims of the East and West, his two sons were created, in their tender youth, the consuls of the same year. On the memorable day of their inauguration, they proceeded in solemn pomp from their palace to the forum, amidst the applause of the senate and people ; and their joyful father, the true consul of Rome, after pronouncing an oration in the praise of his royal benefactor, distributed a triumphal largess in the games of the circus. Prosperous in his fame and fortunes, in his public honours and private alliances, in the cultivation of science and the consciousness of virtue, Boethius might have been styled happy, if that precarious epithet could be safely applied before the last term of the life of man.

A philosopher, liberal of his wealth and parsimonious of his time, might be insensible to the common allurements of ambition, the thirst of gold and employment. And some credit may be due to the asseveration of Boethius, that he had reluctantly obeyed the divine Plato, who enjoins every virtuous citizen to rescue the state from the usurpation of vice and ignorance. For the integrity of his public conduct he appeals to the memory of his country. His authority had restrained the pride and oppression of the royal officers, and his eloquence had delivered Paulianus from the dogs of the palace. He had always pitied, and often relieved, the distress of the provincials, whose fortunes were exhausted by public and private rapine ; and Boethius alone had courage to oppose the tyranny of the Barbarians, elated by conquest, excited by avarice, and, as he complains, encouraged by impunity. In these honourable contests, his spirit soared above the consideration of danger, and perhaps of prudence ; and we may learn from the example of Cato that a character of pure and inflexible virtue is the most apt to be misled by prejudice, to be heated by enthusiasm, and to confound private enmities with public justice. The disciple of Plato might exaggerate the infirmities of nature and the imperfections of society ; and the mildest form of a

Gothic kingdom, even the weight of allegiance and gratitude, must be insupportable to the free spirit of a Roman patriot. But the favour and fidelity of Boethius declined in just proportion with the public happiness ; and an unworthy colleague was imposed, to divide and control the power of the master of the offices. In the last gloomy season of Theodoric, he indignantly felt that he was a slave ; but, as his master had only power over his life, he stood without arms and without fear against the face of an angry Barbarian, who had been provoked to believe that the safety of the senate was incompatible with his own. The senator Albinus was accused and already convicted on the presumption of *hoping*, as it was said, the liberty of Rome. “ If Albinus be criminal,” exclaimed the orator, “ the senate and myself are all guilty of the same crime. If we are innocent, Albinus is equally entitled to the protection of the laws.” These laws might not have punished the simple and barren wish of an unattainable blessing ; but they would have shewn less indulgence to the rash confession of Boethius that, had he known of a conspiracy, the tyrant never should. The advocate of Albinus was soon involved in the danger and perhaps the guilt of his client ; their signature (which they denied as a forgery) was affixed to the original address, inviting the emperor to deliver Italy from the Goths ; and three witnesses of honourable rank, perhaps of infamous reputation, attested the treasonable designs of the Roman patrician. Yet his innocence must be presumed, since he was deprived by Theodoric of the means of justification, and rigorously confined in the tower of Pavia, while the senate, at the distance of five hundred miles, pronounced a sentence of confiscation and death against the most illustrious of its members. At the command of the Barbarians, the occult science of a philosopher was stigmatized with the names of sacrilege and magic. A devout and dutiful attachment to the senate was condemned as criminal by the trembling voices of the senators themselves ; and their ingratitude deserved the wish or prediction of Boethius,

that, after him, none should be found guilty of the same offence.

While Boethius, oppressed with fetters, expected each moment the sentence or the stroke of death, he composed in the tower of Pavia the *Consolation of Philosophy*; a golden volume not unworthy of the leisure of Plato or Tully, but which claims incomparable merit from the barbarism of the times and the situation of the author. The celestial guide, whom he had so long invoked at Rome and Athens, now condescended to illumine his dungeon, to revive his courage, and to pour into his wounds her salutary balm. She taught him to compare his long prosperity and his recent distress, and to conceive new hopes from the inconstancy of fortune. Reason had informed him of the precarious condition of her gifts; experience had satisfied him of their real value; he had enjoyed them without guilt; he might resign them without a sigh, and calmly disdain the impotent malice of his enemies, who had left him happiness, since they had left him virtue. From the earth, Boethius ascended to heaven in search of the SUPREME GOOD; explored the metaphysical labyrinth of chance and destiny, of prescience and free-will, of time and eternity; and generously attempted to reconcile the perfect attributes of the Deity with the apparent disorders of his moral and physical government. Such topics of consolation, so obvious, so vague, or so abstruse, are ineffectual to subdue the feelings of human nature. Yet the sense of misfortune may be diverted by the labour of thought; and the sage who could artfully combine in the same work the various riches of philosophy, poetry, and eloquence, must already have possessed the intrepid calmness which he affected to seek. Suspense, the worst of evils, was at length determined by the ministers of death, who executed, and perhaps exceeded, the inhuman mandate of Theodoric. A strong cord was fastened round the head of Boethius and forcibly tightened, till his eyes almost started from their sockets; and some mercy may be discovered in the milder torture

of beating him with clubs till he expired. But his genius survived to diffuse a ray of knowledge over the darkest ages of the Latin world ; the writings of the philosopher were translated by the most glorious of the English kings : and the third emperor of the name of Ctho removed to a more honourable tomb the bones of a Catholic saint, who, from his Arian persecutors, had acquired the honours of martyrdom and the fame of miracles. In the last hours of Boethius, he derived some comfort from the safety of his two sons, of his wife, and of his father-in-law, the venerable Symmachus. But the grief of Symmachus was indiscreet, and perhaps disrespectful : he had presumed to lament, he might dare to revenge, the death of an injured friend. He was dragged in chains from Rome to the palace of Ravenna ; and the suspicions of Theodoric could only be appeased by the blood of an innocent and aged senator.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE IN THE WEST*

THE Greeks, after their country had been reduced into a province, imputed the triumphs of Rome, not to the merit, but to the FORTUNE, of the republic. The inconstant goddess, who so blindly distributes and resumes her favours, had *now* consented (such was the language of envious flattery) to resign her wings, to descend from her globe, and to fix her firm and immutable throne on the banks of the Tiber. A wiser Greek, who has composed, with a philosophic spirit, the memorable history of his own times, deprived his countrymen of this vain and delusive comfort by opening to their view the deep foundations of the greatness of Rome. The fidelity of the citizens to each other, and to the state, was confirmed by the habits of education and the prejudices of religion. Honour, as well as virtue, was the principle of the republic; the ambitious citizens laboured to deserve the solemn glories of a triumph; and the ardour of the Roman youth was kindled into active emulation, as often as they beheld the domestic images of their ancestors. The temperate struggles of the patricians and plebeians had finally established the firm and equal balance of the constitution; which united the freedom of popular assemblies with the authority and wisdom of a senate and the executive powers of a regal magistrate. When the consul displayed the standard of the republic, each citizen bound himself, by the obligation of an oath, to draw his sword in the cause of his country, till he had

discharged the sacred duty by a military service of ten years. This wise institution continually poured into the field the rising generations of freemen and soldiers ; and their numbers were reinforced by the warlike and populous states of Italy, who, after a brave resistance, had yielded to the valour, and embraced the alliance, of the Romans. The sage historian, who excited the virtue of the younger Scipio and beheld the ruin of Carthage, has accurately described their military system ; their levies, arms, exercises, subordination, marches, encampments ; and the invincible legion, superior in active strength to the Macedonian phalanx of Philip and Alexander. From these institutions of peace and war, Polybius has deduced the spirit and success of a people incapable of fear and impatient of repose. The ambitious design of conquest, which might have been defeated by the seasonable conspiracy of mankind, was attempted and achieved ; and the perpetual violation of justice was maintained by the political virtues of prudence and courage. The arms of the republic, sometimes vanquished in battle, 'always victorious in war, advanced with rapid steps to the Euphrates, the Danube, the Rhine, and the Ocean ; and the images of gold, or silver, or brass, that might serve to represent the nations and their kings, were successively broken by the *iron* monarchy of Rome.

The rise of a city, which swelled into an empire, may deserve, as a singular prodigy, the reflection of a philosophic mind. But the decline of Rome was the natural and inevitable effect of immoderate greatness. Prosperity ripened the principle of decay ; the causes of destruction multiplied with the extent of conquest ; and, as soon as time or accident had removed the artificial supports, the stupendous fabric yielded to the pressure of its own weight. The story of its ruin is simple and obvious ; and, instead of inquiring why the Roman empire was destroyed, we should rather be surprised that it had subsisted so long. The victorious legions, who, in distant wars, acquired the vices



of strangers and mercenaries, first oppressed the freedom of the republic, and afterwards violated the majesty of the purple. The emperors, anxious for their personal safety and the public peace, were reduced to the base expedient of corrupting the discipline which rendered them alike formidable to their sovereign and to the enemy ; the vigour of the military government was relaxed, and finally dissolved, by the partial institutions of Constantine ; and the Roman world was overwhelmed by a deluge of Barbarians.

The decay of Rome has been frequently ascribed to the translation of the seat of empire ; but this history has already shewn that the powers of government were *divided* rather than *removed*. The throne of Constantinople was erected in the East ; while the West was still possessed by a series of emperors who held their residence in Italy and claimed their equal inheritance of the legions and provinces. This dangerous novelty impaired the strength, and fomented the vices, of a double reign ; the instruments of an oppressive and arbitrary system were multiplied ; and a vain emulation of luxury, not of merit, was introduced and supported between the degenerate successors of Theodosius. Extreme distress, which unites the virtue of a free people, embitters the factions of a declining monarchy. The hostile favourites of Arcadius and Honorius betrayed the republic to its common enemies ; and the Byzantine court beheld with indifference, perhaps with pleasure, the disgrace of Rome, the misfortunes of Italy, and the loss of the West. Under the succeeding reigns, the alliance of the two empires was restored ; but the aid of the Oriental Romans was tardy, doubtful, and ineffectual ; and the national schism of the Greeks and Latins was enlarged by the perpetual difference of language and manners, of interest, and even of religion. Yet the salutary event approved in some measure the judgment of Constantine. During a long period of decay, his impregnable city repelled the victorious armies of Barbarians, protected the wealth of Asia, and commanded, both in peace and war, the important straits

which connect the Euxine and Mediterranean seas. The foundation of Constantinople more essentially contributed to the preservation of the East than to the ruin of the West.

As the happiness of a *future* life is the great object of religion, we may hear, without surprise or scandal, that the introduction, or at least the abuse, of Christianity had some influence on the decline and fall of the Roman empire. The clergy successfully preached the doctrines of patience and pusillanimity ; the active virtues of society were discouraged ; and the last remains of the military spirit were buried in the cloister ; a large portion of public and private wealth was consecrated to the specious demands of charity and devotion ; and the soldiers' pay was lavished on the useless multitudes of both sexes, who could only plead the merits of abstinence and chastity. Faith, zeal, curiosity, and the more earthly passions of malice and ambition kindled the flame of theological discord ; the church, and even the state, were distracted by religious factions, whose conflicts were sometimes bloody, and always implacable ; the attention of the emperors was diverted from camps to synods ; the Roman world was oppressed by a new species of tyranny ; and the persecuted sects became the secret enemies of their country. Yet party-spirit, however pernicious or absurd, is a principle of union as well as of dissension. The bishops, from eighteen hundred pulpits, inculcated the duty of passive obedience to a lawful and orthodox sovereign ; their frequent assemblies, and perpetual correspondence, maintained the communion of distant churches : and the benevolent temper of the gospel was strengthened, though confined, by the spiritual alliance of the Catholics. The sacred indolence of the monks was devoutly embraced by a servile and effeminate age ; but, if superstition had not afforded a decent retreat, the same vices would have tempted the unworthy Romans to desert, from baser motives, the standard of the republic. Religious precepts are easily obeyed, which indulge and sanctify the natural inclinations of their votaries ; but the pure and genuine influence of

Christianity may be traced in its beneficial, though imperfect, effects on the Barbarian proselytes of the North. If the decline of the Roman empire was hastened by the conversion of Constantine, his victorious religion broke the violence of the fall, and mollified the ferocious temper of the conquerors.

This awful revolution may be usefully applied to the instruction of the present age. It is the duty of a patriot to prefer and promote the exclusive interest and glory of his native country ; but a philosopher may be permitted to enlarge his views, and to consider Europe as one great republic, whose various inhabitants have attained almost the same level of politeness and cultivation. The balance of power will continue to fluctuate, and the prosperity of our own or the neighbouring kingdoms may be alternately exalted or depressed ; but these partial events cannot essentially injure our general state of happiness, the system of arts, and laws, and manners, which so advantageously distinguish, above the rest of mankind, the Europeans and their colonies. The savage nations of the globe are the common enemies of civilized society ; and we may inquire with anxious curiosity, whether Europe is still threatened with a repetition of those calamities which formerly oppressed the arms and institutions of Rome. Perhaps the same reflections will illustrate the fall of that mighty empire, and explain the probable causes of our actual security.

I. The Romans were ignorant of the extent of their danger, and the number of their enemies. Beyond the Rhine and Danube, the northern countries of Europe and Asia were filled with innumerable tribes of hunters and shepherds, poor, voracious, and turbulent ; bold in arms, and impatient to ravish the fruits of industry. The Barbarian world was agitated by the rapid impulse of war ; and the peace of Gaul or Italy was shaken by the distant revolutions of China. The Huns, who fled before a victorious enemy, directed their march towards the West ;

and the torrent was swelled by the gradual accession of captives and allies. The flying tribes who yielded to the Huns assumed in *their* turn the spirit of conquest ; the endless column of Barbarians pressed on the Roman empire with accumulated weight ; and, if the foremost were destroyed, the vacant space was instantly replenished by new assailants. Such formidable emigrations can no longer issue from the North ; and the long repose, which has been imputed to the decrease of population, is the happy consequence of the progress of arts and agriculture. Instead of some rude villages, thinly scattered among its woods and morasses, Germany now produces a list of two thousand three hundred walled towns ; the Christian kingdoms of Denmark, Sweden, and Poland, have been successively established ; and the Hanse merchants, with the Teutonic knights, have extended their colonies along the coast of the Baltic, as far as the Gulf of Finland. From the Gulf of Finland to the Eastern Ocean, Russia now assumes the form of a powerful and civilized empire. The plough, the loom, and the forge, are introduced on the banks of the Volga, the Oby, and the Lena ; and the fiercest of the Tartar hordes have been taught to tremble and obey. The reign of independent Barbarism is now contracted to a narrow span ; and the remnant of Calmucks or Uzbecks, whose forces may be almost numbered, cannot seriously excite the apprehensions of the great republic of Europe. Yet this apparent security should not tempt us to forget that new enemies, and unknown dangers, may *possibly* arise from some obscure people, scarcely visible in the map of the world. The Arabs or Saracens, who spread their conquests from India to Spain, had languished in poverty and contempt, till Mahomet breathed into those savage bodies the soul of enthusiasm.

II. The empire of Rome was firmly established by the singular and perfect coalition of its members. The subject nations, resigning the hope, and even the wish, of independence, embraced the character of Roman citizens ;

and the provinces of the West were reluctantly torn by the Barbarians from the bosom of their mother-country. But this union was purchased by the loss of national freedom and military spirit ; and the servile provinces, destitute of life and motion, expected their safety from the mercenary troops and governors, who were directed by the orders of a distant court. The happiness of an hundred millions depended on the personal merit of one or two men, perhaps children, whose minds were corrupted by education, luxury, and despotic power. The deepest wounds were inflicted on the empire during the minorities of the sons and grandsons of Theodosius ; and, after those incapable princes seemed to attain the age of manhood, they abandoned the church to the bishops, the state to the eunuchs, and the provinces to the Barbarians. Europe is now divided into twelve powerful, though unequal, kingdoms, three respectable commonwealths, and a variety of smaller, though independent states ; the chances of royal and ministerial talents are multiplied, at least with the number of its rulers ; and a Julian, or Semiramis, may reign in the North, while Arcadius and Honorius again slumber on the thrones of the South. The abuses of tyranny are restrained by the mutual influence of fear and shame ; republics have acquired order and stability ; monarchies have imbibed the principles of freedom, or, at least, of moderation ; and some sense of honour and justice is introduced into the most defective constitutions by the general manners of the times. In peace, the progress of knowledge and industry is accelerated by the emulation of so many active rivals : in war, the European forces are exercised by temperate and undecisive contests. If a savage Conqueror should issue from the deserts of Tartary, he must repeatedly vanquish the robust peasants of Russia, the numerous armies of Germany, the gallant nobles of France, and the intrepid freemen of Britain ; who, perhaps, might confederate for their common defence. Should the victorious Barbarians carry slavery and desolation as far as the Atlantic Ocean,

ten thousand vessels would transport beyond their pursuit the remains of civilized society ; and Europe would revive and flourish in the American world, which is already filled with her colonies and institutions.

III. Cold, poverty, and a life of danger and fatigue, fortify the strength and courage of Barbarians. In every age they have oppressed the polite and peaceful nations of China, India, and Persia, who neglected, and still neglect, to counterbalance these natural powers by the resources of military art. The war-like states of antiquity, Greece, Macedonia, and Rome, educated a race of soldiers ; exercised their bodies, disciplined their courage, multiplied their forces by regular evolutions, and converted the iron which they possessed, into strong and serviceable weapons. But this superiority insensibly declined with their laws and manners ; and the feeble policy of Constantine and his successors armed and instructed, for the ruin of the empire, the rude valour of the Barbarian mercenaries. The military art has been changed by the invention of gunpowder ; which enables man to command the two most powerful agents of nature, air and fire. Mathematics, chymistry, mechanics, architecture, have been applied to the service of war ; and the adverse parties oppose to each other the most elaborate modes of attack and of defence. Historians may indignantly observe that the preparations of a siege would found and maintain a flourishing colony ; yet we cannot be displeased that the subversion of a city should be a work of cost and difficulty, or that an industrious people should be protected by those arts, which survive and supply the decay of military virtue. Cannon and fortifications now form an impregnable barrier against the Tartar horse ; and Europe is secure from any future irruption of Barbarians ; since, before they can conquer, they must cease to be barbarous. Their gradual advances in the science of war would always be accompanied, as we may learn from the example of Russia, with a proportionable improvement in the arts of peace and civil policy : and they

themselves must deserve a place among the polished nations whom they subdue.

Should these speculations be found doubtful or fallacious, there still remains a more humble source of comfort and hope. The discoveries of ancient and modern navigators, and the domestic history, or tradition, of the most enlightened nations, represent the *human savage*, naked both in mind and body, and destitute of laws, of arts, of ideas, and almost of language. From this abject condition, perhaps the primitive and universal state of man, he has gradually arisen to command the animals, to fertilise the earth, to traverse the ocean, and to measure the heavens. His progress in the improvement and exercise of his mental and corporeal faculties has been irregular and various, infinitely slow in the beginning, and increasing by degrees with redoubled velocity; ages of laborious ascent have been followed by a moment of rapid downfall; and the several climates of the globe have felt the vicissitudes of light and darkness. Yet the experience of four thousand years should enlarge our hopes, and diminish our apprehensions; we cannot determine to what height the human species may aspire in their advances towards perfection; but it may safely be presumed that no people, unless the face of nature is changed, will relapse into their original barbarism. The improvements of society may be viewed under a threefold aspect. 1. The poet or philosopher illustrates his age and country by the efforts of a *single* mind; but these superior powers of reason or fancy are rare and spontaneous productions, and the genius of Homer, or Cicero, or Newton, would excite less admiration, if they could be created by the will of a prince or the lessons of a preceptor. 2. The benefits of law and policy, of trade and manufactures, of arts and sciences, are more solid, and permanent; and *many* individuals may be qualified, by education and discipline, to promote, in their respective stations, the interest of the community. But this general order is the effect of skill and labour; and the complex

machinery may be decayed by time or injured by violence.

3. Fortunately for mankind, the more useful, or, at least, more necessary arts can be performed without superior talents or national subordination; without the powers of *one* or the union of *many*. Each village, each family, each individual, must always possess both ability and inclination to perpetuate the use of fire and of metals; the propagation and service of domestic animals; the methods of hunting and fishing; the rudiments of navigation; the imperfect cultivation of corn or other nutritive grain; and the simple practice of the mechanic trades. Private genius and public industry may be extirpated; but these hardy plants survive the tempest, and strike an everlasting root into the most unfavourable soil. The splendid days of Augustus and Trajan were eclipsed by a cloud of ignorance; and the Barbarians subverted the laws and palaces of Rome. But the scythe, the invention or emblem of Saturn, still continued annually to mow the harvests of Italy: and the human feasts of the Læstrygons have never been renewed on the coast of Campania.

Since the first discovery of the arts, war, commerce, and religious zeal have diffused, among the savages of the Old and New World, those inestimable gifts: they have been successively propagated; they can never be lost. We may therefore acquiesce in the pleasing conclusion that every age of the world has increased, and still increases, the real wealth, the happiness, the knowledge, and perhaps the virtue, of the human race.



## CHAPTER IX

### CHARLEMAGNE

(768—814 A.D.)

[INTRODUCTION.—At the end of the fifth century A.D., when the Roman Empire of the West had fallen to pieces, a new power arose in Gaul. This was the Merovingian Franks, who founded a kingdom under their leader Clovis in North-Eastern France. The Merovingian kings in their turn became mere *Rois Fainéants*, and were puppets in the hands of their chief officials, the Mayors of the Palace. The first powerful Mayor of the Palace was Pepin, who deposed his master. Pepin's son, Charlemagne, was the Justinian of his age, warrior and law-giver. He conquered and partly civilized the savage Saxon hordes; he won great victories over the Lombards in Italy and the Moors in Spain. In all his conquests, his first thought was to establish law and order. He drew up a *leges*<sup>1</sup> code, encouraged learning and education, and made the Feudal system the basis of his administration. Above all, he realized the supreme importance of the Church, and had himself crowned by Leo III at Rome on Christmas Day, 800 A.D. This memorable event marks the beginning of a new epoch in history, the Holy Roman Empire.]

#### I

THE mutual obligations of the popes and the Carlovingian family form the important link of ancient and modern, of civil and ecclesiastical, history. In the conquest of Italy, the champions of the Roman church obtained a favourable occasion, a specious title, the wishes of the people, the prayers and intrigues of the clergy. But the most essential gifts of the popes to the Carlovingian race were the dignities of king of France and of patrician of Rome. I. Under the sacerdotal monarchy of St. Peter, the nations began to resume the practice of seeking, on the banks of the Tiber, their kings, their laws, and the oracles of their fate. The

Franks were perplexed between the name and substance of their government. All the powers of royalty were exercised by Pepin, mayor of the palace ; and nothing, except the regal title, was wanting to his ambition. His enemies were crushed by his valour ; his friends were multiplied by his liberality ; his father had been the saviour of Christendom ; and the claims of personal merit were repeated and ennobled in a descent of four generations. The name and image of royalty was still preserved in the last descendant of Clovis, the feeble Childeric ; but his obsolete right could only be used as an instrument of sedition ; the nation was desirous of restoring the simplicity of the constitution ; and Pepin, a subject and a prince, was ambitious to ascertain his own rank and the fortune of his family. The mayor and nobles were bound, by an oath of fidelity, to the royal phantom ; the blood of Clovis was pure and sacred in their eyes ; and their common ambassadors addressed the Roman pontiff, to dispel their scruples or to absolve their promise. The interest of pope Zachary, the successor of the two Gregories, prompted him to decide, and to decide in their favour ; he pronounced that the nation might lawfully unite, in the same person, the title and authority of king ; and that the unfortunate Childeric, a victim of the public safety, should be degraded, shaved, and confined in a monastery for the remainder of his days. An answer so agreeable to their wishes was accepted by the Franks, as the opinion of a casuist, the sentence of a judge, or the oracle of a prophet ; the Merovingian race disappeared from the earth ; and Pepin was exalted on a buckler by the suffrage of a free people, accustomed to obey his laws and to march under his standard. His coronation was twice performed, with the sanction of the popes, by their most faithful servant St. Boniface, the apostle of Germany, and by the grateful hands of Stephen the Third, who, in the monastery of St. Denys, placed the diadem on the head of his benefactor. The royal unction of the kings of Israel was dexterously applied ; the successor of St.

Peter assumed the character of a divine ambassador ; a German chieftain was transformed into the Lord's anointed ; and this Jewish rite has been diffused and maintained by the superstition and vanity of modern Europe. The Franks were absolved from their ancient oath ; but a dire anathema was thundered against them and their posterity, if they should dare to renew the same freedom of choice, or to elect a king, except in the holy and meritorious race of the Carolingian princes. Without apprehending the future danger, these princes gloried in their present security ; the secretary of Charlemagne affirms that the French sceptre was transferred by the authority of the popes ; and in their boldest enterprises they insist, with confidence, on this signal and successful act of temporal jurisdiction.

II. In the change of manners and language, the patricians of Rome were far removed from the senate of Romulus or the palace of Constantine, from the free nobles of the republic or the fictitious parents of the emperor. After the recovery of Italy and Africa by the arms of Justinian, the importance and danger of those remote provinces required the presence of a supreme magistrate ; he was indifferently styled the exarch or the patrician ; and these governors of Ravenna, who fill their place in the chronology of princes, extended their jurisdiction over the Roman city. Since the revolt of Italy and the loss of the Exarchate, the distress of the Romans had exacted some sacrifice of their independence. Yet, even in this act, they exercised the right of disposing of themselves ; and the decrees of the senate and people successively invested Charles Martel and his posterity with the honours of patrician of Rome. The leaders of a powerful nation would have disdained a servile title and subordinate office ; but the reign of the Greek emperors was suspended ; and, in the vacancy of the empire, they derived a more glorious commission from the pope and the republic. The Roman ambassadors presented these patricians with the keys of the shrine of St. Peter, as a pledge and symbol of sovereignty ; with a holy banner,

which it was their right and duty to unfurl in the defence of the church and city. In the time of Charles Martel and of Pepin, the interposition of the Lombard kingdom covered the freedom, while it threatened the safety, of Rome ; and the *patriciate* represented only the title, the service, the alliance, of these distant protectors. The power and policy of Charlemagne annihilated an enemy, and imposed a master. In his first visit to the capital, he was received with all the honours which had formerly been paid to the exarch, the representative of the emperor ; and these honours obtained some new decorations from the joy and gratitude of pope Hadrian the First. No sooner was he informed of the sudden approach of the monarch, than he despatched the magistrates and nobles of Rome to meet him, with the banner, about thirty miles from the city. At the distance of one mile, the Flaminian way was lined with the *schools*, or national communities, of Greeks, Lombards, Saxons, &c. ; the Roman youth was under arms ; and the children of a more tender age, with palms and olive branches in their hands, chaunted the praises of their great deliverer. At the aspect of the holy crosses and ensigns of the saints, he dismounted from his horse, led the procession of his nobles to the Vatican, and, as he ascended the stairs, devoutly kissed each step of the threshold of the apostles. In the portico, Hadrian expected him at the head of his clergy ; they embraced, as friends and equals ; but, in their march to the altar, the king or patrician assumed the right hand of the pope. Nor was the Frank content with these vain and empty demonstrations of respect. In the twenty-six years that elapsed between the conquest of Lombardy and his Imperial coronation, Rome, which had been delivered by the sword, was subject as his own to the sceptre, of Charlemagne. The people swore allegiance to his person and family ; in his name money was coined and justice was administered ; and the election of the popes was examined and confirmed by his authority. Except an original and self-inherent claim of

sovereignty, there was not any prerogative remaining which the title of emperor could add to the patrician of Rome.

The gratitude of the Carlovingsians was adequate to these obligations, and their names are consecrated as the saviours and benefactors of the Roman church. Her ancient patrimony of farms and houses was transformed by their bounty into the temporal dominion of cities and provinces ; and the donation of the Exarchate was the first-fruits of the conquests of Pepin. Astolphus with a sigh relinquished his prey ; the keys and the hostages of the principal cities were delivered to the French ambassador ; and, in his master's name, he presented them before the tomb of St. Peter. The ample measure of the Exarchate might comprise all the provinces of Italy which had obeyed the emperor and his vicegerent ; but its strict and proper limits were included in the territories of Ravenna, Bologna, and Ferrara ; its inseparable dependency was the Pentapolis, which stretched along the Adriatic from Rimini, to Ancona, and advanced into the midland country as far as the ridges of the Apennine. In this transaction, the ambition and avarice of the popes has been severely condemned. Perhaps the humility of a Christian priest should have rejected an earthly kingdom, which it was not easy for him to govern without renouncing the virtues of his profession. Perhaps a faithful subject, or even a generous enemy, would have been less impatient to divide the spoils of the barbarian ; and, if the emperor had entrusted Stephen to solicit in his name the restitution of the Exarchate, I will not absolve the pope from the reproach of treachery and falsehood. But in the rigid interpretation of the laws every one may accept, without injury, whatever his benefactor can bestow without injustice. The Greek emperor had abdicated or forfeited his right to the Exarchate ; and the sword of Astolphus was broken by the stronger sword of the Carlovingsian. It was not in the cause of the Iconoclast that Pepin had exposed his person and army in a double expedition beyond the Alps ; he possessed, and

might lawfully alienate, his conquests ; and to the importunities of the Greeks he piously replied that no human consideration should tempt him to resume the gift which he had conferred on the Roman pontiff for the remission of his sins and the salvation of his soul. The splendid donation was granted in supreme and absolute dominion, and the world beheld, for the first time, a Christian bishop invested with the prerogatives of a temporal prince : the choice of magistrates, the exercise of justice, the imposition of taxes, and the wealth of the palace of Ravenna. In the dissolution of the Lombard kingdom, the inhabitants of the duchy of Spoleto sought a refuge from the storm, shaved their heads after the Roman fashion, declared themselves the servants and subjects of St. Peter, and completed, by this voluntary surrender, the present circle of the ecclesiastical state. That mysterious circle was enlarged to an indefinite extent by the verbal or written donation of Charlemagne, who, in the first transports of his victory, despoiled himself and the Greek emperor of the cities and islands which had formerly been annexed to the Exarchate. But, in the cooler moments of absence and reflection, he viewed, with an eye of jealousy and envy, the recent greatness of his ecclesiastical ally. The execution of his own and his father's promises was respectfully eluded ; the king of the Franks and Lombards asserted the inalienable rights of the empire ; and, in his life and death, Ravenna, as well as Rome, was numbered in the list of his metropolitan cities. The sovereignty of the Exarchate melted away in the hands of the popes ; they found in the archbishops of Ravenna a dangerous and domestic rival ; the nobles and priests disdained the yoke of a priest ; and, in the disorders of the times, they could only retain the memory of an ancient claim, which, in a more prosperous age, they have revived and realised.

Fraud is the resource of weakness and cunning ; and the strong, though ignorant, barbarian was often entangled in the net of sacerdotal policy. The Vatican and Lateran

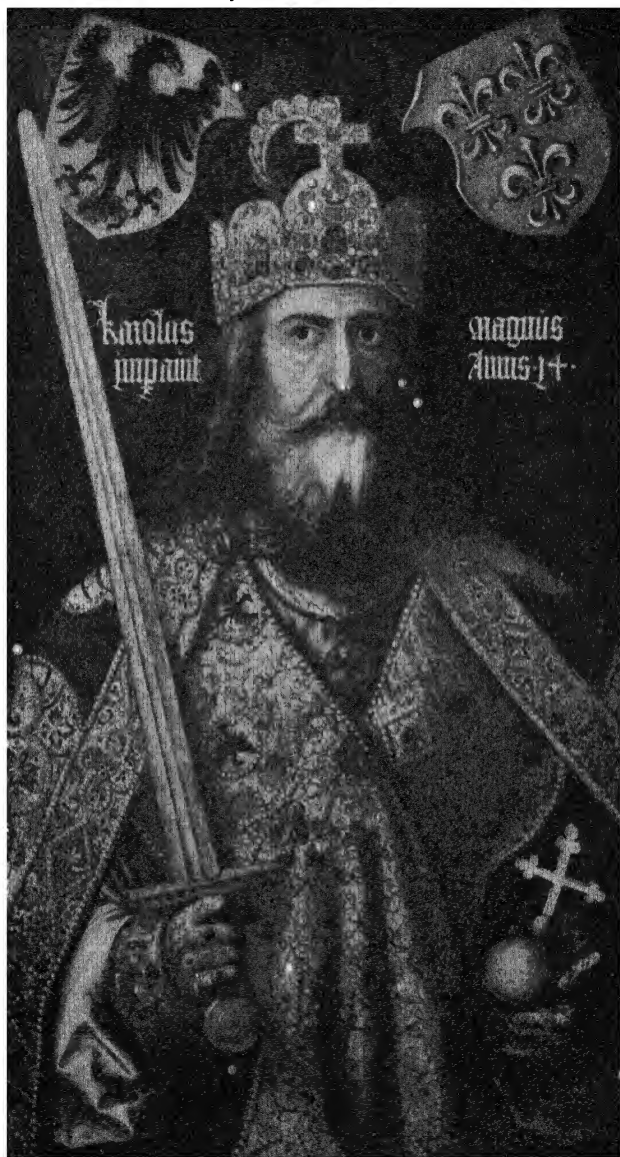
were an arsenal and manufacture, which, according to the occasion, have produced or concealed a various collection of false or genuine, of corrupt or suspicious acts, as they tended to promote the interest of the Roman church. Before the end of the eighth century, some apostolical scribe, perhaps the notorious Isidore, composed the decretals, and the donation of Constantine, the two magic pillars of the spiritual and temporal monarchy of the popes. This memorable donation was introduced to the world by an epistle of Hadrian the First, who exhorts Charlemagne to imitate the liberality, and revive the name, of the great Constantine. According to the legend, the first of the Christian emperors was healed of the leprosy, and purified in the waters of baptism, by St. Silvester, the Roman bishop; and never was physician more gloriously recompensed. His royal proselyte withdrew from the seat and patrimony of St. Peter; declared his resolution of founding a new capital in the East; and resigned to the popes the free and perpetual sovereignty of Rome, Italy, and the provinces of the West. This fiction was productive of the most beneficial effects. The Greek princes were convicted of the guilt of usurpation; and the revolt of Gregory was the claim of his lawful inheritance. The popes were delivered from their debt of gratitude; and the nominal gifts of the Carovingians were no more than the just and irrevocable restitution of a scanty portion of the ecclesiastical state. The sovereignty of Rome no longer depended on the choice of a fickle people; and the successors of St. Peter and Constantine were invested with the purple and prerogatives of the Cæsars. So deep was the ignorance and credulity of the times that the most absurd of fables was received, with equal reverence, in Greece and in France, and is still enrolled among the decrees of the canon law. The emperors and the Romans were incapable of discerning a forgery that subverted their rights and freedom; and the only opposition proceeded from a Sabine monastery, which, in the beginning of the twelfth century, disputed the truth

and validity of the donation of Constantine. In the revival of letters and liberty this fictitious deed was transpierced by the pen of Laurentius Valla, the pen of an eloquent critic and a Roman patriot. His contemporaries of the fifteenth century were astonished at his sacrilegious boldness ; yet such is the silent and irresistible progress of reason that before the end of the next age the fable was rejected by the contempt of historians and poets, and the tacit or modest censure of the advocates of the Roman church. The popes themselves have indulged a smile at the credulity of the vulgar ; but a false and obsolete title still sanctifies their reign ; and, by the same fortune which has attended the decretals and the Sibylline oracles, the edifice has subsisted after the foundations have been undermined.

## II

BEFORE the ruin of paganism in Rome, the competition for a wealthy bishopric had often been productive of tumult and bloodshed. The people was less numerous, but the times were more savage, the prize more important, and the chair of St. Peter was fiercely disputed by the leading ecclesiastics who aspired to the rank of sovereign. The reign of Hadrian the First surpasses the measure of past or succeeding ages ; the walls of Rome, the sacred patrimony, the ruin of the Lombards and the friendship of Charlemagne, were the trophies of his fame ; he secretly edified the throne of his successors, and displayed in a narrow space the virtues of a great prince. His memory was revered ; but in the next election, a priest of the Lateran (Leo the Third) was preferred to the nephew and the favourite of Hadrian, whom he had promoted to the first dignities of the church. Their acquiescence or repentance disguised, above four years, the blackest intention of revenge, till the day of a procession, when a furious band of conspirators dispersed the unarmed multitude and assaulted with blows and wounds the sacred person of the





CHARLES THE GREAT  
(From the Painting by Albrecht Dürer)

pope. But their enterprise on his life or liberty was disappointed, perhaps by their own confusion and remorse. Leo was left for dead on the ground ; on his revival from the swoon, the effect of his loss of blood, he recovered his speech and sight ; and this natural event was improved to the miraculous restoration of his eyes and tongue, of which he had been deprived, twice deprived, by the knife of the assassins. From his prison, he escaped to the Vatican ; the duke of Spoleto hastened to his rescue, Charlemagne sympathized in his injury, and in his camp of Paderborn in Westphalia accepted or solicited a visit from the Roman pontiff. Leo repassed the Alps with a commission of counts and bishops, the guards of his safety and the judges of his innocence ; and it was not without reluctance that the conqueror of the Saxons delayed till the ensuing year the personal discharge of this pious office. In his fourth and last pilgrimage, he was received at Rome with the due honours of king and patrician ; Leo was permitted to purge himself by oath of the crimes imputed to his charge ; his enemies were silenced, and the sacrilegious attempt against his life was punished by the mild and insufficient penalty of exile. On the festival of Christmas, the last year of the eighth century, Charlemagne appeared in the church of St. Peter ; and, to gratify the vanity of Rome, he had exchanged the simple dress of his country for the habit of a patrician. After the celebration of the holy mysteries, Leo suddenly placed a precious crown on his head, and the dome resounded with the acclamations of the people, " Long life and victory to Charles, the most pious Augustus, crowned by God, the great and pacific emperor of the Romans ! " The head and body of Charlemagne were consecrated by the royal unction ; after the example of the Cæsars he was saluted or adored by the pontiff ; his coronation oath represents a promise to maintain the faith and privileges of the church ; and the first-fruits were paid in his rich offerings to the shrine of the apostle. In his familiar conversation, the emperor protested his ignorance

of the intentions of Leo, which he would have disappointed by his absence on that memorable day. But the preparations of the ceremony must have disclosed the secret ; and the journey of Charlemagne reveals his knowledge and expectation : he had acknowledged that the imperial title was the object of his ambition, and a Roman senate had pronounced that it was the only adequate reward of his merit and services.

The appellation of *great* has been often bestowed and sometimes deserved, but CHARLEMAGNE is the only prince in whose favour the title has been indissolubly blended with the name. That name, with the addition of *saint*, is inserted in the Roman calendar ; and the saint, by a rare felicity, is crowned with the praises of the historians and philosophers of an enlightened age. His *real* merit is doubtless enhanced by the barbarism of the nation and the times from which he emerged ; but the *apparent* magnitude of an object is likewise enlarged by an unequal comparison ; and the ruins of Palmyra derive a casual splendour from the nakedness of the surrounding desert. Without injustice to his fame, I may discern some blemishes in the sanctity and greatness of the restorer of the Western empire. I shall be scarcely permitted to accuse the ambition of a conqueror ; but, in a day of equal retribution, the sons of his brother Carloman, the Merovingian princes of Aquitain, and the four thousand five hundred Saxons who were beheaded on the same spot, would have something to allege against the justice and humanity of Charlemagne. His treatment of the vanquished Saxons was an abuse of the right of conquest ; his laws were not less sanguinary than his arms ; and, in the discussion of his motives, whatever is subtracted from bigotry must be imputed to temper. The sedentary reader is amazed by his incessant activity of mind and body ; and his subjects and enemies were not less astonished at his sudden presence, at the moment when they believed him at the most distant extremity of the empire ; neither peace nor war, nor summer nor winter,

were a season of repose : and our fancy cannot easily reconcile the annals of his reign with the geography of his expeditions. But this activity was a national rather than a personal virtue ; the vagrant life of a Frank was spent in the chase, in pilgrimage, in military adventures ; and the journeys of Charlemagne were distinguished only by a more numerous train and a more important purpose. His military renown must be tried by the scrutiny of his troops, his enemies, and his actions. Alexander conquered with the arms of Philip, but the *two* heroes who preceded Charlemagne bequeathed him their name, their examples, and the companions of their victories. At the head of his veteran and superior armies, he oppressed the savage or degenerate nations who were incapable of confederating for their common safety ; nor did he ever encounter an equal antagonist in numbers, in discipline, or in arms. The science of war has been lost and revived with the arts of peace ; but his campaigns are not illustrated by any siege or battle of singular difficulty and success ; and he might behold, with envy, the Saracen trophies of his grandfather. After his Spanish expedition, his rear-guard was defeated in the Pyrenæan mountains ; and the soldiers, whose situation was irretrievable and whose valour was useless, might accuse, with their last breath, the want of skill or caution of their general. I touch with reverence the laws of Charlemagne, so highly applauded by a respectable judge. They compose not a system, but a series, of occasional and minute edicts, for the correction of abuses, the reformation of manners, the economy of his farms, the care of his poultry, and even the sale of his eggs. He wished to improve the laws and the character of the Franks ; and his attempts, however feeble and imperfect, are deserving of praise. The inveterate evils of the times were suspended or mollified by his government ; but in his institutions I can seldom discover the general views and the immortal spirit of a legislator, who survives himself for the benefit of posterity. The union and stability of his empire

depended on the life of a single man ; he imitated the dangerous practice of dividing his kingdoms among his sons ; and, after his numerous diets, the whole constitution was left to fluctuate between the disorders of anarchy and despotism. His esteem for the piety and knowledge of the clergy tempted him to entrust that aspiring order with temporal dominion and civil jurisdiction ; and his son Lewis, when he was stripped and degraded by the bishops, might accuse, in some measure, the imprudence of his father. His laws enforced the imposition of tithes, because the dæmons had proclaimed in the air that the default of payment had been the cause of the last scarcity. The literary merits of Charlemagne are attested by the foundation of schools, the introduction of arts, the works which were published in his name, and his familiar connexion with the subjects and strangers whom he invited to his court to educate both the prince and people. His own studies were tardy, laborious, and imperfect : if he spoke Latin and understood Greek, he derived the rudiments of knowledge from conversation rather than from books ; and, in his mature age, the emperor strove to acquire the practice of writing, which every peasant now learns in his infancy. The grammar and logic, the music and astronomy, of the times were only cultivated as the handmaids of superstition ; but the curiosity of the human mind must ultimately tend to its improvement, and the encouragement of learning reflects the purest and most pleasing lustre on the character of Charlemagne. The dignity of his person, the length of his reign, the prosperity of his arms, the vigour of his government, and the reverence of distant nations distinguish him from the royal crowd ; and Europe dates a new æra from his restoration of the Western empire.

That empire was not unworthy of its title ; and some of the fairest kingdoms of Europe were the patrimony or conquest of a prince who reigned at the same time in France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Hungary. I. The Roman province of Gaul had been transformed into the name and

monarchy of FRANCE ; but, in the decay of the Merovingian line, its limits were contracted by the independence of the Britons and the revolt of Aquitain. Charlemagne pursued, and confined, the Britons on the shores of the ocean ; and that ferocious tribe, whose origin and language are so different from the French, was chastised by the imposition of tribute, hostages, and peace. After a long and evasive

### CHARLEMAGNE'S EMPIRE



From Grant's "History of Europe."

contest, the rebellion of the dukes of Aquitain was punished by the forfeiture of their province, their liberty, and their lives. Harsh and rigorous would have been such treatment of ambitious governors, who had too faithfully copied the mayors of the palace. But a recent discovery has proved that these unhappy princes were the last and lawful heirs of the blood and sceptre of Clovis, a younger branch, from the brother of Dagobert, of the Merovingian house.

Their ancient kingdom was reduced to the duchy of Gasconne, to the counties of Fesenzac and Armagnac, at the foot of the Pyrenees ; their race was propagated till the beginning of the sixteenth century ; and, after surviving their Carlovingian tyrants, they were reserved to feel the injustice, or the favours, of a third dynasty. By the reunion of Aquitain, France was enlarged to its present boundaries, with the additions of the Netherlands and Spain, as far as the Rhine. II. The Saracens had been expelled from France by the grandfather and father of Charlemagne ; but they still possessed the greatest part of SPAIN, from the rock of Gibraltar to the Pyrenees. Amidst their civil divisions, an Arabian emir of Saragossa implored his protection in the diet of Paderborn. Charlemagne undertook the expedition, restored the emir, and, without distinction of faith, impartially crushed the resistance of the Christians, and rewarded the obedience and service of the Mahometans. In his absence he instituted the *Spanish march*, which extended from the Pyrenees to the river Ebro ; Barcelona was the residence of the French governor ; he possessed the counties of *Rousillon* and *Catalonia* ; and the infant kingdoms of *Navarre* and *Arragon* were subject to his jurisdiction. III. As king of the Lombards, and patrician of Rome, he reigned over the greatest part of ITALY, a tract of a thousand miles from the Alps to the borders of Calabria. The duchy of *Beneventum*, a Lombard fief, had spread, at the expense of the Greeks, over the modern kingdom of Naples. But Arrechis, the reigning duke, refused to be included in the slavery of his country ; assumed the independent title of prince ; and opposed his sword to the Carlovingian monarchy. His defence was firm, his submission was not inglorious, and the emperor was content with an easy tribute, the demolition of his fortresses, and the acknowledgment, on his coins, of a supreme lord. The artful flattery of his son Grimoald added the appellation of father, but he asserted his dignity with prudence, and Beneventum insensibly escaped from

the French yoke. IV. Charlemagne was the first who united GERMANY under the same sceptre. The name of *Oriental France* is preserved in the circle of *Franconia* ; and the people of *Hesse* and *Thuringia* were recently incorporated with the victors by the conformity of religion and government. The *Alemanni*, so formidable to the Romans, were the faithful vassals and confederates of the Franks ; and their country was inscribed within the modern limits of *Alsace*, *Swabia*, and *Switzerland*. The *Bavarians*, with a similar indulgence of their laws and manners, were less patient of a master ; the repeated treasons of Tasillo justified the abolition of her hereditary dukes ; and their power was shared among the counts, who judged and guarded that important frontier. But the north of Germany, from the Rhine and beyond the Elbe, was still hostile and Pagan ; nor was it till after a war of thirty-three years that the Saxons bowed under the yoke of Christ and of Charlemagne. The idols and their votaries were extirpated ; the foundation of eight bishoprics, of Munster, Osnaburgh, Paderborn, and Minden, of Bremen, Verden, Hildesheim, and Halberstadt, define, on either side of the Weser, the bounds of ancient Saxony ; these episcopal seats were the first schools and cities of that savage land ; and the religion and humanity of the children atoned, in some degree, for the massacre of the parents. Beyond the Elbe, the *Slavi*, or Slavonians, of similar manners and various denominations, overspread the modern dominions of Prussia, Poland, and Bohemia, and some transient marks of obedience have tempted the French historian to extend the empire to the Baltic and the Vistula. The conquest or conversion of those countries is of a more recent age ; but the first union of *Bohemia* with the Germanic body may be justly ascribed to the arms of Charlemagne. V. He retaliated on the Avars, or Huns of Pannonia, the same calamities which they had inflicted on the nations. Their rings, the wooden fortifications which encircled their districts and villages, were broken down by the triple effort of a French army,

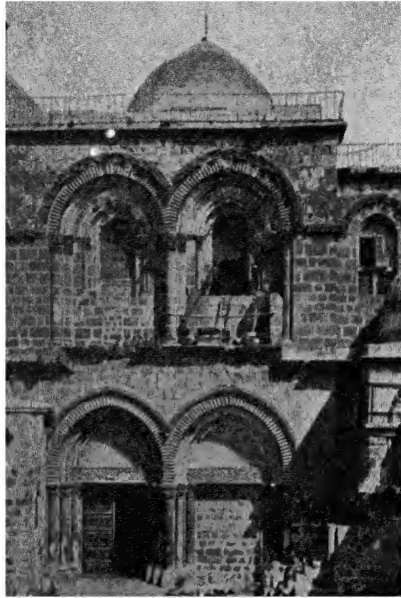


that was poured into their country by land and water, through the Carpathian mountains and along the plain of the Danube. After a bloody conflict of eight years, the loss of some French generals was avenged by the slaughter of the most noble Huns ; the relics of the nation submitted ; the royal residence of the chagan was left desolate and unknown ; and the treasures, the rapine of two hundred and fifty years, enriched the victorious troops or decorated the churches of Italy and Gaul. After the reduction of Pannonia, the empire of Charlemagne was bounded only by the conflux of the Danube with the Theiss and the Save ; the provinces of Istria, Liburnia, and Dalmatia were an easy, though unprofitable, accession ; and it was an effect of his moderation that he left the maritime cities under the real or nominal sovereignty of the Greeks. But these distant possessions added more to the reputation than to the power of the Latin emperor ; nor did he risk any ecclesiastical foundations to reclaim the barbarians from their vagrant life and idolatrous worship. Some canals of communication between the rivers, the Saone and the Meuse, the Rhine and the Danube, were faintly attempted. Their execution would have vivified the empire ; and more cost and labour were often wasted in the structure of a cathedral.

If we retrace the outlines of this geographical picture, it will be seen that the empire of the Franks extended, between east and west, from the Ebro to the Elbe or Vistula ; between the north and south, from the duchy of Beneventum to the river Eyder, the perpetual boundary of Germany and Denmark. The personal and political importance of Charlemagne was magnified by the distress and division of the rest of Europe. The islands of Great Britain and Ireland were disputed by a crowd of princes of Saxon or Scottish origin ; and, after the loss of Spain, the Christian and Gothic kingdom of Alphonso the Chaste was confined to the narrow range of the Asturian mountains. These petty sovereigns revered the power or virtue of the

Carlovingian monarch, implored the honour and support of his alliance, and styled him their common parent, the sole and supreme emperor of the West. He maintained a more equal intercourse with the caliph Harun al Rashid, whose dominion stretched from Africa to India, and accepted from his ambassadors a tent, a water-clock, an elephant, and the keys of the Holy Sepulchre. It is not easy to conceive the private friendship of a Frank and an Arab, who were strangers to each other's person, and language, and religion ; but their public correspondence was founded on vanity, and their remote situation left no room for a competition of interest. Two-thirds of the Western empire of Rome were subject to Charlemagne, and the deficiency was amply supplied by his command of the inaccessible or invincible nations of Germany. But in the choice of his enemies we may be reasonably surprised that he so often preferred the poverty of the north to the riches of the south. The three-and-thirty campaigns laboriously consumed in the woods and morasses of Germany would have sufficed to assert the amplitude of his title by the expulsion of the Greeks from Italy and the Saracens from Spain. The weakness of the Greeks would have ensured an easy victory ; and the holy crusade against the Saracens would have been prompted by glory and revenge, and loudly justified by religion and policy. Perhaps, in his expeditions beyond the Rhine and the Elbe, he aspired to save his monarchy from the fate of the Roman empire, to disarm the enemies of civilised society, and to eradicate the seed of future emigrations. But it has been wisely observed that, in a light of precaution, all conquest must be ineffectual, unless it could be universal ; since the increasing circle must be involved in a larger sphere of hostility. The subjugation of Germany withdrew the veil which had so long concealed the continent or islands of Scandinavia from the knowledge of Europe, and awakened the torpid courage of their barbarous natives. The fiercest of the Saxon idolaters escaped from the Christian tyrant to their brethren of the north ; the ocean and

Mediterranean were covered with their piratical fleets ; and Charlemagne beheld with a sigh the destructive progress of the Normans, who, in less than seventy years, precipitated the fall of his race and monarchy.



THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY  
SEPULCHRE AT JERUSALEM

## CHAPTER X

### *THE FIRST CRUSADE*

(A.D. 1096)

[INTRODUCTION.—Jerusalem was looked upon as a sacred city and place of pilgrimage alike by Jews, Christians and Mahommedans : the latter, indeed, regarded it as only less holy than Mecca itself. The power of the Church was steadily growing in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and the Crusades were the first great international undertaking of Catholic Europe. Pilgrimages to the Sepulchre of Christ had begun when Constantine, and his mother, Helena, had covered it with a stately dome. They were stimulated by the approaching Millenium of A.D. 1000. As long as Jerusalem was in the hands of the tolerant and enlightened Arabs, all was well ; but the Seljukian Turks treated all Christians with great barbarity. The Papacy could not afford to ignore the challenge.]

ABOUT twenty years after the conquest of Jerusalem by the Turks, the holy sepulchre was visited by an hermit of the name of Peter, a native of Amiens, in the province of Picardy in France. His resentment and sympathy were excited by his own injuries and the oppression of the Christian name ; he mingled his tears with those of the patriarch, and earnestly inquired if no hopes of relief could be entertained from the Greek emperors of the East. The patriarch exposed the vices and weakness of the successors of Constantine. "I will rouse," exclaimed the hermit, "the martial nations of Europe in your cause" ; and Europe was obedient to the call of the hermit. The astonished patriarch dismissed him with epistles of credit and complaint ; and no sooner did he land at Bari than Peter hastened to kiss the feet of the Roman Pontiff. His stature was small, his appearance contemptible ; but, his

eye was keen and lively ; and he possessed that vehemence of speech which seldom fails to impart the persuasion of the soul. He was born of a gentleman's family (for we must now adopt a modern idiom), and his military service was under the neighbouring counts of Boulogne, the heroes of the first crusade. But he soon relinquished the sword and the world. In this austere solitude, his body was emaciated, his fancy was inflamed ; whatever he wished, he believed ; whatever he believed, he *saw* in dreams and revelations. From Jerusalem the pilgrim returned an accomplished fanatic ; but, as he excelled in the popular madness of the times, Pope Urban the Second received him as a prophet, applauded his glorious design, promised to support it in a general council, and encouraged him to proclaim the deliverance of the Holy Land. Invigorated by the approbation of the Pontiff, his zealous missionary traversed, with speed and success, the provinces of Italy and France. His diet was abstemious, his prayers long and fervent, and the alms which he received with one hand, he distributed with the other ; his head was bare, his feet naked, his meagre body was wrapt in a coarse garment ; he bore and displayed a weighty crucifix ; and the ass on which he rode was sanctified in the public eye by the service of the man of God. He preached to innumerable crowds in the churches, the streets, and the high-ways : the hermit entered with equal confidence the palace and the cottage ; and the people, for all was people, were impetuously moved by his call to repentance and arms. When he painted the sufferings of the natives and pilgrims of Palestine, every heart was melted to compassion ; every breast glowed with indignation, when he challenged the warriors of the age to defend their brethren and rescue their Saviour : his ignorance of art and language was compensated by sighs, and tears, and ejaculations ; and Peter supplied the deficiency of reason by loud and frequent appeals to Christ and his mother, to the saints and angels of paradise, with whom he had personally conversed. The most perfect

orator of Athens might have envied the success of his eloquence: the rustic enthusiast inspired the passions which he felt, and Christendom expected with impatience the counsels and decrees of the supreme Pontiff.

The magnanimous spirit of Gregory the Seventh had already embraced the design of arming Europe against Asia; the ardour of his zeal and ambition still breathes in his epistles. From either side of the Alps, fifty thousand Catholics had enlisted under the banner of St. Peter; and his successor reveals *his* intention of marching at their head against the impious sectaries of Mahomet. But the glory or reproach of executing, though not in person, this holy enterprise was reserved for Urban the Second, the most faithful of his disciples. He undertook the conquest of the East, whilst the larger portion of Rome was possessed and fortified by his rival, Guibert of Ravenna, who contended with Urban for the name and honours of the pontificate. He attempted to unite the powers of the West, at a time when the princes were separated from the church, and the people from their princes, by the excommunication which himself and his predecessors had thundered against the emperor and the king of France. Philip the First, of France, supported with patience the censures which he had provoked by his scandalous life and adulterous marriage. Henry the Fourth, of Germany, asserted the right of investitures, the prerogative of confirming his bishops by the delivery of the ring and crosier. But the emperor's party was crushed in Italy by the arms of the Normans and the Countess Mathilda. So popular was the cause of Urban, so weighty was his influence, that the council which he summoned at Placentia was composed of two hundred bishops of Italy, France, Burgundy, Swabia, and Bavaria. Four thousand of the clergy, and thirty thousand of the laity, attended this important meeting; and, as the most spacious cathedral would have been inadequate to the multitude, the session of seven days was held in a plain adjacent to the city. The

ambassadors of the Greek emperor, Alexius Comnenus, were introduced to plead the distress of their sovereign, and the danger of Constantinople, which was divided only by a narrow sea from the victorious Turks, the common enemy of the Christian name. In their suppliant address, they flattered the pride of the Latin princes ; and, appealing at once to their policy and religion, exhorted them to repel the barbarians on the confines of Asia rather than to expect them in the heart of Europe. At the sad tale of the misery and perils of their Eastern brethren, the assembly burst into tears ; the most eager champions declared their readiness to march ; and the Greek ambassadors were dismissed with the assurance of a speedy and powerful succour. The relief of Constantinople was included in the larger and most distant project of the deliverance of Jerusalem ; but the prudent Urban adjoined the final decision to a second synod, which he proposed to celebrate in some city of France in the autumn of the same year. The short delay would propagate the flame of enthusiasm ; and his firmest hope was in a nation of soldiers, still proud of the pre-eminence of their name, and ambitious to emulate their hero Charlemagne, who, in the popular romance of Turpin, had achieved the conquest of the Holy Land. A latent motive of affection or vanity might influence the choice of Urban. He was himself a native of France, a monk of Clugny, and the first of his countrymen who ascended the throne of St. Peter. The Pope had illustrated his family and province. Nor is there perhaps a more exquisite gratification than to revisit, in a conspicuous dignity, the humble and laborious scenes of our youth.

It may occasion some surprise that the Roman pontiff should erect, in the heart of France, the tribunal from whence he hurled his anathemas against the king ; but our surprise will vanish, so soon as we form a just estimate of a king of France of the eleventh century. Philip the First was the great-grandson of Hugh Capet, the founder of the present race, who, in the decline of Charlemagne's posterity,



added the regal title to his patrimonial estates of Paris and Orleans. In this narrow compass he was possessed of wealth and jurisdiction ; but, in the rest of France, Hugh and his first descendants were no more than the feudal lords of about sixty dukes and counts, of independent and hereditary power, who disdained the control of laws and legal assemblies, and whose disregard of their sovereign was avenged by the disobedience of their inferior vassals. At Clermont, in the territories of the count of Auvergne, the pope might brave with impunity the resentment of Philip ; and the council which he convened in that city was not less numerous or respectable than the synod of Placentia. Besides his court and council of Roman cardinals, he was supported by thirteen archbishops and two hundred and twenty-five bishops ; the number of mitred prelates was computed at four hundred ; and the fathers of the church were blessed by the saints, and enlightened by the doctors, of the age. From the adjacent kingdoms a martial train of lords and knights of power and renown attended the council, in high expectation of its resolves ; and such was the ardour of zeal and curiosity that the city was filled, and many thousands, in the month of November, erected their tents or huts in the open field. A session of eight days produced some useful or edifying canons for the reformation of manners ; a severe censure was pronounced against the licence of private war ; the Truce of God was confirmed, a suspension of hostilities during four days of the week ; women and priests were placed under the safeguard of the church ; and a protection of three years was extended to husbandmen and merchants, the defenceless victims of military rapine. But a law, however venerable be the sanction, cannot suddenly transform the temper of the times ; and the benevolent efforts of Urban deserve the less praise, since he laboured to appease some domestic quarrels that he might spread the flames of war from the Atlantic to the Euphrates. From the synod of Placentia the rumour of his great design had gone forth among the

nations ; the clergy, on their return, had preached in every diocese the merit and glory of the deliverance of the Holy Land ; and, when the pope ascended a lofty scaffold in the market-place of Clermont, his eloquence was addressed to a well-prepared and impatient audience. His topics were obvious, his exhortation was vehement, his success inevitable. The orator was interrupted by the shout of thousands, who with one voice, and in their rustic idiom, exclaimed aloud, " God wills it, God wills it ! " " It is indeed the will of God," replied the pope ; " and let this memorable word, the inspiration surely of the Holy Spirit, be for ever adopted as your cry of battle, to animate the devotion and courage of the champions of Christ. His cross is the symbol of your salvation ; wear it, a red, bloody cross, as an external mark on your breasts or shoulders, as a pledge of your sacred and irrevocable engagement." The proposal was joyfully accepted ; great numbers both of the clergy and laity impressed on their garments the sign of the cross, and solicited the pope to march at their head. This dangerous honour was declined by the more prudent successor of Gregory, who alleged the schism of the church, and the duties of his pastoral office, recommending to the faithful, who were disqualified by sex or profession, by age or infirmity, to aid, with their prayers and alms, the personal service of their robust brethren. The name and powers of his legate he devolved on Adhemar, bishop of Puy, the first who had received the cross at his hands. The foremost of the temporal chiefs was Raymond, count of Toulouse, whose ambassadors in the council excused the absence, and pledged the honour, of their master. After the confession and absolution of their sins, the champions of the cross were dismissed with a superfluous admonition to invite their countrymen and friends ; and their departure for the Holy Land was fixed to the festival of the Assumption, the fifteenth of August, of the ensuing year.

So familiar, and as it were so natural, to man is the

practice of violence that our indulgence allows the slightest provocation, the most disputable right, as a sufficient ground of national hostility. But the name and nature of an *holy war* demands a more rigorous scrutiny ; nor can we hastily believe that the servants of the Prince of Peace would unsheath the sword of destruction, unless the motives were pure, the quarrel legitimate, and the necessity inevitable. The policy of an action may be determined from the tardy lessons of experience ; but, before we act, our conscience should be satisfied of the justice and propriety of our enterprise. In the age of the crusades, the Christians, both of the East and West, were persuaded of their lawfulness and merit ; their arguments are clouded by the perpetual abuse of scripture and rhetoric ; but they seem to insist on the right of natural and religious defence, their peculiar title to the Holy Land, and the impiety of their Pagan and Mahometan foes. I. The right of a just defence may fairly include our civil and spiritual allies : it depends on the existence of danger ; and that danger must be estimated by the twofold consideration of the malice and the power of our enemies. A pernicious tenet has been imputed to the Mahometans, the duty of *extirpating* all other religions by the sword. This charge of ignorance and bigotry is refuted by the Koran, by the history of the Musulman conquerors, and by their public and legal toleration of the Christian worship. But it cannot be denied that the Oriental churches are depressed under their iron yoke ; that, in peace and war, they assert a divine and indefeasible claim of universal empire ; and that, in their orthodox creed, the unbelieving nations are continually threatened with the loss of religion or liberty. In the eleventh century, the victorious arms of the Turks presented a real and urgent apprehension of these losses. They had subdued, in less than thirty years, the kingdoms of Asia, as far as Jerusalem and the Hellespont ; and the Greek empire tottered on the verge of destruction. Besides an honest sympathy for their brethren, the Latins had a

right and interest in the support of Constantinople, the most important barrier of the West ; and the privilege of defence must reach to prevent, as well as to repel, an impending assault. But this salutary purpose might have been accomplished by a moderate succour ; and our calmer reason must disclaim the innumerable hosts and remote operations which overwhelmed Asia and depopulated Europe. II. Palestine could add nothing to the strength or safety of the Latins ; and fanaticism alone could pretend to justify the conquest of that distant and narrow province. The Christians affirmed that their inalienable title to the promised land had been sealed by the blood of their divine Saviour : it was their right and duty to rescue their inheritance from the unjust possessors, who profaned his sepulchre and oppressed the pilgrimage of his disciples. Vainly would it be alleged that the pre-eminence of Jerusalem and the sanctity of Palestine have been abolished with the Mosaic law ; that the God of the Christians is not a local deity ; and that the recovery of Bethlehem or Calvary, his cradle or his tomb, will not atone for the violation of the moral precepts of the gospel. Such arguments glance aside from the leaden shield of superstition ; and the religious mind will not easily relinquish its hold on the sacred ground of mystery and miracle. III. But the holy wars which have been waged in every climate of the globe, from Egypt to Livonia, and from Peru to Hindostan, require the support of some more general and flexible tenet. It has been often supposed, and sometimes affirmed, that a difference of religion is a worthy cause of hostility ; that obstinate unbelievers may be slain or subdued by the champions of the cross ; and that grace is the sole fountain of dominion as well as of mercy. Above four hundred years before the first crusade, the eastern and western provinces of the Roman empire had been acquired about the same time and in the same manner, by the barbarians of Germany and Arabia. Time and treaties had legitimated the conquests of the *Christian Franks* : but, in the eyes of their

subjects and neighbours, the Mahometan princes were still tyrants and usurpers, who, by the arms of war or rebellion, might be lawfully driven from their unlawful possession.

As the manners of the Christians were relaxed, their discipline of penance was enforced ; and, with the multiplication of sins, the remedies were multiplied. In the primitive church, a voluntary and open confession prepared the work of atonement. In the middle ages, the bishops and priests interrogated the criminal ; compelled him to account for his thoughts, words, and actions ; and prescribed the terms of his reconciliation with God. But, as this discretionary power might alternately be abused by indulgence and tyranny, a rule of discipline was framed, to inform and regulate the spiritual judges. This mode of legislation was invented by the Greeks ; their *penitentials* were translated, or imitated, in the Latin church ; and, in the time of Charlemagne, the clergy of every diocese were provided with a code, which they prudently concealed from the knowledge of the vulgar. In this dangerous estimate of crimes and punishments, each case was supposed, each difference was remarked, by the experience or penetration of the monks ; some sins are enumerated which innocence could not have suspected, and others which reason cannot believe ; and the more ordinary offences of adultery, of perjury and sacrilege, of rapine and murder, were expiated by a penance which, according to the various circumstances, was prolonged from forty days to seven years. During this term of mortification, the patient was healed, the criminal was absolved, by a salutary regimen of fasts and prayers ; the disorder of his dress was expressive of grief and remorse ; and he humbly abstained from all the business and pleasure of social life. But the rigid execution of these laws would have depopulated the palace, the camp, and the city ; the barbarians of the West believed and trembled ; but nature often rebelled against principle ; and the magistrate laboured without effect to enforce the jurisdiction of the priest. His insolvency was relieved by a

commutation, or *indulgence* : a year of penance was appreciated at twenty-six *solidi* of silver, about four pounds sterling, for the rich ; at three *solidi*, or nine shillings, for the indigent : and these alms were soon appropriated to the use of the church, which derived, from the redemption of sins, an inexhaustible source of opulence and dominion. A debt of three hundred years, or twelve hundred pounds, was enough to impoverish a plentiful fortune ; the scarcity of gold and silver was supplied by the alienation of land ; and the princely donations of Pepin and Charlemagne are expressly given for the *remedy* of their soul. It is a maxim of the civil law, That whosoever cannot pay with his purse must pay with his body ; and the practice of flagellation was adopted by the monks, a cheap, though painful, equivalent. By a fantastic arithmetic, a year of penance was taxed at three thousand lashes ; and such was the skill and patience of a famous hermit, St. Dominic of the Iron Cuirass, that in six days he could discharge an entire century, by a whipping of three hundred thousand stripes. His example was followed by many penitents of both sexes ; and, as a vicarious sacrifice was accepted, a sturdy disciplinarian might expiate on his own back the sins of his benefactors. These compensations of the purse and the person introduced, in the eleventh century, a more honourable mode of satisfaction. The merit of military service against the Saracens of Africa and Spain had been allowed by the predecessors of Urban the Second. In the council of Clermont, that Pope proclaimed a plenary indulgence to those who should enlist under the banner of the cross : the absolution of *all* their sins, and a full receipt for *all* that might be due of canonical penance. The cold philosophy of modern times is incapable of feeling the impression that was made on a sinful and fanatic world. At the voice of their pastor, the robber, the incendiary, the homicide, arose by thousands to redeem their souls, by repeating on the infidels the same deeds which they had exercised against their Christian brethren ; and the terms of atonement were eagerly embraced by

offenders of every rank and denomination. None were pure ; none were exempt from the guilt and penalty of sin ; and those who were the least amenable to the justice of God and the church were the best entitled to the temporal and eternal recompense of their pious courage. If they fell, the spirit of the Latin clergy did not hesitate to adorn their tomb with the crown of martyrdom ; and, should they survive, they could expect without impatience the delay and increase of their heavenly reward. They offered their blood to the Son of God, who had laid down his life for their salvation : they took up the cross, and entered with confidence into the way of the Lord. His providence would watch over their safety ; perhaps his visible and miraculous power would smooth the difficulties of their holy enterprise. The cloud and pillar of Jehovah had marched before the Israelites into the promised land. Might not the Christians more reasonably hope that the rivers would open for their passage ; that the walls of the strongest cities would fall at the sound of their trumpets ; and that the sun would be arrested in his mid-career, to allow them time for the destruction of the infidels ?

Of the chiefs and soldiers who marched to the holy sepulchre, I will dare to affirm that *all* were prompted by the spirit of enthusiasm, the belief, the hope of reward, and the assurance of divine aid. But I am equally persuaded that in *many* it was not the sole, that in *some* it was not the leading, principle of action. The use and abuse of religion are feeble to stem, they are strong and irresistible to impel, the stream of national manners. Against the private wars of the barbarians, their bloody tournaments, licentious loves, and judicial duels, the popes and synods might ineffectually thunder. It is a more easy task to provoke the metaphysical disputes of the Greeks, to drive into the cloister the victims of anarchy or despotism, to sanctify the patience of slaves and cowards, or to assume the merit of the humanity and benevolence of modern Christians. War and exercise were the reigning passions

of the Franks or Latins ; they were enjoined, as a penance, to gratify those passions, to visit distant lands, and to draw their swords against the nations of the East. Their victory, or even their attempt, would immortalise the names of the intrepid heroes of the cross ; and the purest piety could not be insensible to the most splendid prospect of military glory. In the petty quarrels of Europe, they shed the blood of their friends and countrymen, for the acquisition perhaps of a castle or a village. They could march with alacrity against the distant and hostile nations who were devoted to their arms : their fancy already grasped the golden sceptres of Asia ; and the conquest of Apulia and Sicily by the Normans might exalt to royalty the hopes of the most private adventurer. Christendom, in her rudest state, must have yielded to the climate and cultivation of the Mahometan countries ; and their natural and artificial wealth had been magnified by the tales of pilgrims and the gifts of an imperfect commerce. The vulgar, both the great and small, were taught to believe every wonder, of lands flowing with milk and honey, of mines and treasures, of gold and diamonds, of palaces of marble and jasper, and of odoriferous groves of cinnamon and frankincense. In this earthly paradise each warrior depended on his sword to carve a plenteous and honourable establishment, which he measured only by the extent of his wishes. Their vassals and soldiers trusted their fortunes to God and their master : the spoils of a Turkish emir might enrich the meanest follower of the camp ; and the flavour of the wines, the beauty of the Grecian women, were temptations more adapted to the nature, than to the profession, of the champions of the cross. The love of freedom was a powerful incitement to the multitudes who were oppressed by feudal or ecclesiastical tyranny. Under this holy sign, the peasants and burghers, who were attached to the servitude of the glebe, might escape from an haughty lord, and transplant themselves and their families to a land of liberty. The monk might release himself from the discipline of his



convent ; the debtor might suspend the accumulation of usury and the pursuit of his creditors ; and outlaws and malefactors of every cast might continue to brave the laws and elude the punishment of their crimes.

These motives were potent and numerous : when we have singly computed their weight on the mind of each individual, we must add the infinite series, the multiplying powers of example and fashion. The first proselytes became the warmest and most effectual missionaries of the cross : among their friends and countrymen they preached the duty, the merit, and the recompense of their holy vow ; and the most reluctant hearers were insensibly drawn within the whirlpool of persuasion and authority. The martial youths were fired by the reproach or suspicion of cowardice ; the opportunity of visiting with an army the sepulchre of Christ was embraced by the old and infirm, by women and children, who consulted rather their zeal than their strength ; and those who in the evening had derided the folly of their companions were the most eager, the ensuing day, to tread in their footsteps. The ignorance, which magnified the hopes, diminished the perils, of the enterprise. Since the Turkish conquest, the paths of pilgrimage were obliterated ; the chiefs themselves had an imperfect notion of the length of the way and the state of their enemies ; and such was the stupidity of the people that, at the sight of the first city or castle beyond the limits of their knowledge, they were ready to ask, whether that was not the Jerusalem, the term and object of their labours. Yet the more prudent of the crusaders, who were not sure that they should be fed from heaven with a shower of quails or manna, provided themselves with those precious metals which, in every country, are the representatives of every commodity. To defray, according to their rank, the expenses of the road, princes alienated their provinces, nobles their lands and castles, peasants their cattle and the instruments of husbandry. The value of property was depreciated by the eager competition of multitudes ; while

the price of arms and horses was raised to an exorbitant height, by the wants and impatience of the buyers. Those who remained at home, with sense and money, were enriched by the epidemical disease: the sovereigns acquired at a cheap rate the domains of their vassals; and the ecclesiastical purchasers completed the payment by the assurance of their prayers. The cross, which was commonly sewed on the garment, in cloth or silk, was inscribed by some zealots on their skin; an hot iron, or indelible liquor, was applied to perpetuate the mark; and a crafty monk, who showed the miraculous impression on his breast, was repaid with the popular veneration and the richest benefices of Palestine.

## CHAPTER XI

### *ROME IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY*

[INTRODUCTION.—This is one of the best of Gibbon's descriptions. He depicts Rome at the height of her power in the Middle Ages: the forms of liberty still preserved in the ancient offices of senator and tribune: the rivalry of Emperor and Pope for the supreme power: and the short-lived revolt against the papal despotism of that most interesting of mediæval revolutionaries and dreamers, Arnold of Brescia.]

IN the beginning of the twelfth century, the æra of the first crusade, Rome was revered by the Latins, as the metropolis of the world, as the throne of the pope and the emperor, who, from the eternal city, derived their title, their honours, and the right or exercise of temporal dominion. After so long an interruption, it may not be useless to repeat that the successors of Charlemagne and the Othos were chosen beyond the Rhine in a national diet; but that these princes were content with the humble names of kings of Germany and Italy, till they had passed the Alps and the Apennine, to seek their Imperial crown on the banks of the Tiber. At some distance from the city, their approach was saluted by a long procession of the clergy and people with palms and crosses; and the terrific emblems of wolves and lions, of dragons and eagles, that floated in the military banners, represented the departed legions and cohorts of the republic. The royal oath to maintain the liberties of Rome was thrice reiterated, at the bridge, the gate, and on the stairs of the Vatican; and the distribution of a customary donative feebly imitated the magnificence of the first Cæsars. In the church of St. Peter, the coronation was performed by his successor; the voice of God was confounded with

that of the people ; and the public consent was declared in the acclamations of " Long life and victory to our lord the pope ! Long life and victory to our lord the emperor ! Long life and victory to the Roman and Teutonic armies ! " The names of Cæsar and Augustus, the laws of Constantine and Justinian, the example of Charlemagne and Otho, established the supreme dominion of the emperors ; their title and image was engraved on the papal coins ; and their jurisdiction was marked by the sword of justice, which they delivered to the præfect of the city. But every Roman prejudice was awakened by the name, the language, and the manners, of a barbarian lord. The Cæsars of Saxony or Franconia were the chiefs of a feudal aristocracy ; nor could they exercise the discipline of civil and military power, which alone secures the obedience of a distant people, impatient of servitude, though perhaps incapable of freedom. Once, and once only, in his life, each emperor, with an army of Teutonic vassals, descended from the Alps. I have described the peaceful order of his entry and coronation ; but that order was commonly disturbed by the clamour and sedition of the Romans, who encountered their sovereign as a foreign invader : his departure was always speedy, and often shameful ; and, in the absence of a long reign, his authority was insulted, and his name was forgotten. The progress of independence in Germany and Italy undermined the foundations of the Imperial sovereignty, and the triumph of the popes was the deliverance of Rome.

Of her two sovereigns, the emperor had precariously reigned by the right of conquest ; but the authority of the pope was founded on the soft, though more solid, basis of opinion and habit. The removal of a foreign influence restored and endeared the shepherd to his flock. Instead of the arbitrary or venal nomination of a German court, the vicar of Christ was freely chosen by the college of cardinals, most of whom were either natives or inhabitants of the city. The applause of the magistrates and people confirmed his election ; and the ecclesiastical power that

was obeyed in Sweden and Britain had been ultimately derived from the suffrage of the Romans. The same suffrage gave a prince, as well as a pontiff, to the capital. It was universally believed that Constantine had invested the popes with the temporal dominion of Rome ; and the boldest civilians, the most profane sceptics, were satisfied with disputing the right of the emperor and the validity of his gift. The truth of the fact, the authenticity of his donation, was deeply rooted in the ignorance and tradition of four centuries ; and the fabulous origin was lost in the real and permanent effects. The name of *Dominus*, or Lord, was inscribed on the coin of the bishops ; their title was acknowledged by acclamations and oaths of allegiance ; and, with the free or reluctant consent of the German Cæsars, they had long exercised a supreme or subordinate jurisdiction over the city and patrimony of St. Peter. The reign of the popes, which gratified the prejudices, was not incompatible with the liberties of Rome ; and a more critical inquiry would have revealed a still nobler source of their power : the gratitude of a nation, whom they had rescued from the heresy and oppression of the Greek tyrant. In an age of superstition, it should seem that the union of the royal and sacerdotal characters would mutually fortify each other, and that the keys of paradise would be the surest pledge of earthly obedience. The sanctity of the office might indeed be degraded by the personal vices of the man ; but the scandals of the tenth century were obliterated by the austere and more dangerous virtues of Gregory the Seventh and his successors ; and, in the ambitious contests which they maintained for the rights of the church, their sufferings or their success must equally tend to increase the popular veneration. They sometimes wandered in poverty and exile, the victims of persecution ; and the apostolic zeal with which they offered themselves to martyrdom must engage the favour and sympathy of every Catholic breast. And sometimes, thundering from the Vatican, they created, judged, and deposed the kings

of the world ; nor could the proudest Roman be disgraced by submitting to a priest whose feet were kissed, and whose stirrup was held, by the successors of Charlemagne. Even the temporal interest of the city should have protected in peace and honour the residence of the popes ; from whence a vain and lazy people derived the greatest part of their subsistence and riches. The fixed revenue of the popes was probably impaired : many of the old patrimonial estates, both in Italy and the provinces, had been invaded by sacrilegious hands ; nor could the loss be compensated by the claim rather than the possession of the more ample gifts of Pepin and his descendants. But the Vatican and Capitol were nourished by the incessant and increasing swarms of pilgrims and suppliants ; the pale of Christianity was enlarged, and the pope and cardinals were overwhelmed by the judgment of ecclesiastical and secular causes. A new jurisprudence had established in the Latin church the right and practice of appeals ; and, from the North and West, the bishops and abbots were invited or summoned to solicit, to complain, to accuse, or to justify, before the threshold of the apostles. A rare prodigy is once recorded, that two horses, belonging to the Archbishops of Mentz and Cologne, repassed the Alps, yet laden with gold and silver ; but it was soon understood that the success, both of the pilgrims and clients, depended much less on the justice of their cause than on the value of their offering. The wealth and piety of these strangers were ostentatiously displayed ; and their expenses, sacred or profane, circulated in various channels for the emolument of the Romans.

Such powerful motives should have firmly attached the voluntary and pious obedience of the Roman people to their spiritual and temporal father. But the operation of prejudice and interest is often disturbed by the sallies of ungovernable passion. The Indian who fells the tree that he may gather the fruit, and the Arab who plunders the caravans of commerce, are actuated by the same impulse of savage nature, which overlooks the future in the present,

and relinquishes for momentary rapine the long and secure possession of the most important blessings. And it was thus that the shrine of St. Peter was profaned by the thoughtless Romans, who pillaged the offerings, and wounded the pilgrims, without computing the number and value of similar visits, which they prevented by their inhospitable sacrilege. Even the influence of superstition is fluctuating and precarious ; and the slave, whose reason is subdued, will often be delivered by his avarice or pride. A credulous devotion for the fables and oracles of the priesthood most powerfully acts on the mind of a barbarian ; yet such a mind is the least capable of preferring imagination to sense, of sacrificing to a distant motive, to an invisible, perhaps an ideal, object, the appetites and interests of the present world. In the vigour of health and youth, his practice will perpetually contradict his belief ; till the pressure of age, or sickness, or calamity, awakens his terrors and compels him to satisfy the double debt of piety and remorse. I have already observed that the modern times of religious indifference are the most favourable to the peace and security of the clergy. Under the reign of superstition they had much to hope from the ignorance, and much to fear from the violence, of mankind. The wealth, whose constant increase must have rendered them the sole proprietors of the earth, was alternately bestowed by the repentant father and plundered by the rapacious son ; their persons were adored or violated ; and the same idol, by the hands of the same votaries, was placed on the altar or trampled in the dust. In the feudal system of Europe, arms were the title of distinction and the measure of allegiance ; and amidst their tumult the still voice of law and reason was seldom heard or obeyed. The turbulent Romans disdained the yoke, and insulted the impotence, of their bishop ; nor would his education or character allow him to exercise, with decency or effect, the power of the sword. The motives of his election and the frailties of his life were exposed to their familiar observation ; and proximity must

diminish the reverence which his name and his decrees impressed on a barbarous world. This difference has not escaped the notice of our philosophic historian : " Though the name and authority of the court of Rome were so terrible in the remote countries of Europe, which were sunk in profound ignorance, and were entirely unacquainted with its character and conduct, the pope was so little revered at home that his inveterate enemies surrounded the gates of Rome itself and even controlled his government in that city ; and the ambassadors, who, from a distant extremity of Europe, carried to him the humble, or rather abject, submissions of the greatest potentate of the age, found the utmost difficulty to make their way to him and to throw themselves at his feet."

Since the primitive times, the wealth of the popes was exposed to envy, their power to opposition, and their persons to violence. But the long hostility of the mitre and the crown increased the numbers, and inflamed the passions, of their enemies. The deadly factions of the Guelphs and Ghibelines, so fatal to Italy, could never be embraced with truth or constancy by the Romans, the subjects and adversaries both of the bishop and emperor ; but their support was solicited by both parties ; and they alternately displayed in their banners the keys of St. Peter and the German eagle. Gregory the Seventh, who may be adored or detested as the founder of the papal monarchy, was driven from Rome and died in exile at Salerno. Six-and-thirty of his successors, till their retreat to Avignon, maintained an unequal contest with the Romans ; their age and dignity were often violated ; and the churches, in the solemn rites of religion, were polluted with sedition and murder. A repetition of such capricious brutality, without connection or design, would be tedious and disgusting ; and I shall content myself with some events of the twelfth century, which represent the state of the popes and the city. On Holy Thursday, while Paschal officiated before the altar, he was interrupted by the clamours of the multitude, who



imperiously demanded the confirmation of a favourite magistrate. His silence exasperated their fury; his pious refusal to mingle the affairs of earth and heaven was encountered with menaces and oaths, that he should be the cause and the witness of the public ruin. During the festival of Easter, while the bishop and the clergy, barefoot and in procession, visited the tombs of the martyrs, they were twice assaulted, at the bridge of St. Angelo and before the Capitol, with volleys of stones and darts. The houses of his adherents were levelled with the ground; Paschal escaped with difficulty and danger; he levied an army in the patrimony of St. Peter; and his last days were embittered by suffering and inflicting the calamities of civil war. The scenes that followed the election of his successor Gelasius the Second were still more scandalous to the church and city. Cencio Frangipani, a potent and factious baron, burst into the assembly furious, and in arms: the cardinals were stripped, beaten, and trampled under foot; and he seized, without pity or respect, the vicar of Christ by the throat. Gelasius was dragged by his hair along the ground, buffeted with blows, wounded with spurs, and bound with an iron chain in the house of his brutal tyrant. An insurrection of the people delivered their bishop; the rival families opposed the violence of the Frangipani; and Cencio, who sued for pardon, repented of the failure rather than of the guilt of his enterprise. Not many days had elapsed when the pope was again assaulted at the altar. While his friends and enemies were engaged in a bloody contest, he escaped in his sacerdotal garments. In this unworthy flight, which excited the compassion of the Roman matrons, his attendants were scattered or unhorsed; and, in the fields behind the church of St. Peter, his successor was found alone and half dead with fear and fatigue. Shaking the dust from his feet, the *apostle* withdrew from a city in which his dignity was insulted and his person was endangered; and the vanity of sacerdotal ambition is revealed in the involuntary confession that one emperor

was more tolerable than twenty. These examples might suffice ; but I cannot forget the sufferings of two pontiffs of the same age, the second and third of the name of Lucius. The former, as he ascended in battle-array to assault the Capitol, was struck on the temple by a stone, and expired in a few days ; the latter was severely wounded in the persons of his servants. In a civil commotion several of his priests had been made prisoners ; and the inhuman Romans, reserving one as a guide for his brethren, put out their eyes, crowned them with ludicrous mitres, mounted them on asses, with their faces to the tail, and extorted an oath that in this wretched condition they should offer themselves as a lesson to the head of the church. Hope or fear, lassitude or remorse, the characters of the men and the circumstances of the times, might sometimes obtain an interval of peace and obedience ; and the pope was restored with joyful acclamations to the Lateran or Vatican, from whence he had been driven with threats and violence. But the root of the mischief was deep and perennial ; and a momentary calm was preceded and followed by such tempests as had almost sunk the bark of St. Peter. Rome continually presented the aspect of war and discord ; the churches and palaces were fortified and assaulted by the factions and families ; and, after giving peace to Europe, Calixtus the Second alone had resolution and power to prohibit the use of private arms in the metropolis. Among the nations who revered the apostolic throne, the tumults of Rome provoked a general indignation ; and, in a letter to his disciple Eugenius the Third, St. Bernard, with the sharpness of his wit and zeal, has stigmatized the vices of the rebellious people. “ Who is ignorant,” says the monk of Clairvaux, “ of the vanity and arrogance of the Romans ? a nation nursed in sedition, cruel, untractable, and scorning to obey, unless they are too feeble to resist. When they promise to serve, they aspire to reign ; if they swear allegiance, they watch the opportunity of revolt ; yet they vent their discontent in loud clamours, if your doors or your

councils are shut against them. Dexterous in mischief, they have never learned the science of doing good. Odious to earth and heaven, impious to God, seditious among themselves, jealous of their neighbours, inhuman to strangers, they love no one, by no one are they beloved ; and, while they wish to inspire fear, they live in base and continual apprehension. They will not submit ; they know how to govern ; faithless to their superiors, intolerable to their equals, ungrateful to their benefactors, and alike imprudent in their demands and their refusals. Lofty in promise, poor in execution : adulation and calumny, perfidy and treason, are the familiar arts of their policy." Surely this dark portrait is not coloured by the pencil of Christian charity ; yet the features, however harsh and ugly, express a lively resemblance of the Romans of the twelfth century.

The Jews had rejected the Christ when he appeared among them in a plebeian character ; and the Romans might plead their ignorance of his vicar when he assumed the pomp and pride of a temporal sovereign. In the busy age of the crusades, some sparks of curiosity and reason were re-kindled in the Western world ; the heresy of Bulgaria, the Paulician sect, was successfully transplanted into the soil of Italy and France ; the Gnostic visions were mingled with the simplicity of the Gospel ; and the enemies of the clergy reconciled their passions with their conscience, the desire of freedom with the profession of piety. The trumpet of Roman liberty was first sounded by Arnold of Brescia, whose promotion in the church was confined to the lowest rank, and who wore the monastic habit rather as a garb of poverty than as an uniform of obedience. His adversaries could not deny the wit and eloquence which they severely felt ; they confess with reluctance the specious purity of his morals ; and his errors were recommended to the public by a mixture of important and beneficial truths. In his theological studies, he had been the disciple of the famous and unfortunate Abelard, who was likewise involved

a soft and flexible nature ; and his ecclesiastical judges were edified and disarmed by the humility of his repentance. From this master Arnold most probably imbibed some metaphysical definitions of the Trinity, repugnant to the taste of the times ; his ideas of baptism and the eucharist are loosely censured ; but a *political* heresy was the source of his fame and misfortunes. He presumed to quote the declaration of Christ that his kingdom is not of this world : he boldly maintained that the sword and the sceptre were entrusted to the civil magistrate ; that temporal honours and possessions were lawfully vested in secular persons ; that the abbots, the bishops, and the pope himself must renounce either their state or their salvation ; and that, after the loss of their revenues, the voluntary tithes and oblations of the faithful would suffice, not indeed for luxury and avarice, but for a frugal life in the exercise of spiritual labours. During a short time the preacher was revered as a patriot ; and the discontent, or revolt, of Brescia against her bishop was the first-fruits of his dangerous lessons. But the favour of the people is less permanent than the resentment of the priest ; and, after the heresy of Arnold had been condemned by Innocent the Second in the general council of the Lateran the magistrates themselves were urged by prejudice and fear to execute the sentence of the church. Italy could no longer afford a refuge ; and the disciple of Abelard escaped beyond the Alps, till he found a safe and hospitable shelter in Zurich, now the first of the Swiss cantons. From a Roman station, a royal villa, a chapter of noble virgins, Zurich had gradually increased to a free and flourishing city, where the appeals of the Milanese were sometimes tried by the Imperial commissaries. In an age less ripe for reformation, the præcursor of Zuinglius was heard with applause ; a brave and simple people imbibed, and long retained, the colour of his opinions ; and his art, or merit, seduced the bishop of Constance, and even the pope's legate, who forgot, for his sake, the interest of their master and their order. Their tardy zeal was quick-

ened by the fierce exhortations of St. Bernard ; and the enemy of the church was driven by persecution to the desperate measure of erecting his standard in Rome itself, in the face of the successor of St. Peter.

Yet the courage of Arnold was not devoid of discretion : he was protected, and had perhaps been invited, by the nobles and people ; and in the service of freedom his eloquence thundered over the seven hills. Blending in the same discourse the texts of Livy and St. Paul, uniting the motives of gospel and of classic enthusiasm, he admonished the Romans how strangely their patience and the vices of the clergy had degenerated from the primitive times of the church and the city. He exhorted them to assert the inalienable rights of men and Christians ; to restore the laws and magistrates of the republic ; to respect the *name* of the emperor ; but to confine their shepherd to the spiritual government of his flock. Nor could his spiritual government escape the censure and control of the reformer ; and the inferior clergy were taught by his lessons to resist the cardinals, who had usurped a despotic command over the twenty-eight regions or parishes of Rome. The revolution was not accomplished without rapine and violence, the effusion of blood, and the demolition of houses ; the victorious faction was enriched with the spoils of the clergy and the adverse nobles. Arnold of Brescia enjoyed or deplored the effects of his mission ; his reign continued above ten years, while two popes, Innocent the Second and Anastasius the Fourth, either trembled in the Vatican or wandered as exiles in the adjacent cities. They were succeeded by a more vigorous and fortunate pontiff, Adrian the Fourth, the only Englishman who has ascended the throne of St. Peter ; and whose merit emerged from the mean condition of a monk, and almost a beggar, in the monastery of St. Albans. On the first provocation, of a cardinal killed or wounded in the streets, he cast an interdict on the guilty people ; and, from Christmas to Easter, Rome was deprived of the real or imaginary comforts of

religious worship. The Romans had despised their temporal prince : they submitted with grief and terror to the censures of their spiritual father ; their guilt was expiated by penance, and the banishment of the seditious preacher was the price of their absolution. But the revenge of Adrian was yet unsatisfied, and the approaching coronation of Frederic Barbarossa was fatal to the bold reformer, who had offended, though not in an equal degree, the heads of the church and state. In their interview at Viterbo, the pope represented to the emperor the furious ungovernable spirit of the Romans ; the insults, the injuries, the fears, to which his person and his clergy were continually exposed ; and the pernicious tendency of the heresy of Arnold, which must subvert the principles of civil as well as ecclesiastical subordination. Frederic was convinced by these arguments, or tempted by the desire of the Imperial crown ; in the balance of ambition, the innocence or life of an individual is of small account ; and their common enemy was sacrificed to a moment of political concord. After his retreat from Rome, Arnold had been protected by the viscounts of Campania, from whom he was extorted by the power of Cæsar : the præfect of the city pronounced his sentence ; the martyr of freedom was burnt alive in the presence of a careless and ungrateful people ; and his ashes were cast into the Tiber, lest the heretics should collect and worship the relics of their master. The clergy triumphed in his death ; with his ashes, his sect was dispersed ; his memory still lived in the minds of the Romans. From his school they had probably derived a new article of faith, that the metropolis of the Catholic church is exempt from the penalties of excommunication and interdict. Their bishops might argue that the supreme jurisdiction, which they exercised over kings and nations, more specially embraced the city and diocese of the prince of the apostles. But they preached to the winds, and the same principle that weakened the effect, must temper the abuse, of the thunders of the Vatican.

The love of ancient freedom has encouraged a belief that as early as the tenth century, in their first struggles against the Saxon Othos, the commonwealth was vindicated and restored by the senate and people of Rome ; that two consuls were annually elected among the nobles ; and that ten or twelve plebeian magistrates revived the name and office of the tribunes of the commons. But this venerable structure disappears before the light of criticism. In the darkness of the middle ages, the appellations of senators, of consuls, of the sons of consuls, may sometimes be discovered. They were bestowed by the emperors, or assumed by the most powerful citizens, to denote their rank, their honours, and perhaps the claim of a pure and patrician descent ; but they float on the surface, without a series or a substance, the titles of men, not the orders of government ; and it is only from the year of Christ one thousand one hundred and forty-four, that the establishment of the senate is dated as a glorious æra, in the acts of the city. A new constitution was hastily framed by private ambition or popular enthusiasm ; nor could Rome, in the twelfth century, produce an antiquary to explain, or a legislator to restore, the harmony and proportions of the ancient model. The assembly of a free, of an armed people will ever speak in loud and weighty acclamations. But the regular distribution of the thirty-five tribes, the nice balance of the wealth and numbers of the centuries, the debates of the adverse orators, and the slow operation of votes and ballots could not easily be adapted by a blind multitude, ignorant of the arts, and insensible of the benefits, of legal government. It was proposed by Arnold to revive and discriminate the equestrian order ; but what could be the motive or measure of such distinction ? The pecuniary qualification of the knights must have been reduced to the poverty of the times : those times no longer required their civil functions of judges and farmers of the revenue ; and their primitive duty, their military service on horseback, was more nobly supplied by feudal tenures and the spirit

of chivalry. The jurisprudence of the republic was useless and unknown ; the nations and families of Italy, who lived under the Roman and barbaric laws, were insensibly mingled in a common mass ; and some faint tradition, some imperfect fragments, preserved the memory of the Code and Pandects of Justinian. With their liberty, the Romans might doubtless have restored the appellation and office of consuls, had they not disdained a title so promiscuously adopted in the Italian cities that it has finally settled on the humble station of the agents of commerce in a foreign land. But the rights of the tribunes, the formidable word that arrested the public counsels, suppose, or must produce, a legitimate democracy. The old patricians were the subjects, the modern barons the tyrants, of the state ; nor would the enemies of peace and order, who insulted the vicar of Christ, have long respected the unarmed sanctity of a plebeian magistrate.

In the revolution of the twelfth century, which gave a new existence and æra to Rome, we may observe the real and important events that marked or confirmed her political independence. I. The Capitoline hill, one of her seven eminences, is about four hundred yards in length and two hundred in breadth. A flight of an hundred steps led to the summit of the Tarpeian rock ; and far steeper was the ascent before the declivities had been smoothed and the precipices filled by the ruins of fallen edifices. From the earliest ages, the Capitol had been used as a temple in peace, a fortress in war : after the loss of the city, it maintained a siege against the victorious Gauls ; and the sanctuary of empire was occupied, assaulted, and burnt, in the civil wars of Vitellius and Vespasian. The temples of Jupiter and his kindred dieties had crumbled into dust ; their place was supplied by monasteries and houses ; and the solid walls, the long and shelving porticoes, were decayed or ruined by the lapse of time. It was the first act of the Romans, an act of freedom, to restore the strength, though not the beauty, of the Capitol ; to fortify the seat of their



arms and counsels ; and, as often as they ascended the hill, the coldest minds must have glowed with the remembrance of their ancestors. II. The first Cæsars had been invested with the exclusive coinage of the gold and silver ; to the senate they abandoned the baser metal of bronze or copper ; the emblems and legends were inscribed on a more ample field by the genius of flattery ; and the prince was relieved from the care of celebrating his own virtues. The successors of Diocletian despised even the flattery of the senate : their royal officers at Rome, and in the provinces, assumed the sole direction of the mint ; and the same prerogative was inherited by the Gothic kings of Italy, and the long series of the Greek, the French, and the German dynasties. After an abdication of eight hundred years, the Roman senate asserted this honourable and lucrative privilege ; which was tacitly renounced by the popes, from Paschal the Second to the establishment of their residence beyond the Alps. Some of these republican coins of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are shewn in the cabinets of the curious. On one of these, a gold medal, Christ is depicted, holding in his left hand a book with this inscription, "THE VOW OF THE ROMAN SENATE AND PEOPLE : ROME, THE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD" ; on the reverse, St. Peter delivering a banner to a kneeling senator in his cap and gown, with the name and arms of his family impressed on a shield. III. With the empire, the præfect of the city had declined to a municipal officer ; yet he still exercised in the last appeal the civil and criminal jurisdiction ; and a drawn sword, which he received from the successors of Otho, was the mode of his investiture and the emblem of his functions. The dignity was confined to the noble families of Rome ; the choice of the people was ratified by the pope ; but a triple oath of fidelity must have often embarrassed the præfect in the conflict of adverse duties. A servant, in whom they possessed but a third share, was dismissed by the independent Romans ; in his place they elected a patrician ; but this title, which Charlemagne had

not disdained, was too lofty for a citizen or a subject ; and, after the first fervour of rebellion, they consented without reluctance to the restoration of the præfect. About fifty years after this event, Innocent the Third, the most ambitious, or at least the most fortunate, of the pontiffs, delivered the Romans and himself from this badge of foreign dominion ; he invested the præfect with a banner instead of a sword, and absolved him from all dependence of oaths of service to the German emperors. In his place an ecclesiastic, a present or future cardinal, was named by the pope to the civil government of Rome ; but his jurisdiction has been reduced to a narrow compass ; and in the days of freedom the right or exercise was derived from the senate and people. IV. After the revival of the senate, the conscript fathers (if I may use the expression) were invested with the legislative and executive power ; but their views seldom reached beyond the present day ; and that day was most frequently disturbed by violence and tumult. In its utmost plentitude, the order or assembly consisted of fifty-six senators, the most eminent of whom were distinguished by the title of counsellors ; they were nominated, perhaps annually, by the people ; and a previous choice of their electors, ten persons in each region or parish, might afford a basis for a free and permanent constitution. The popes, who in this tempest submitted rather to bend than to break, confirmed by treaty the establishment and privileges of the senate, and expected from time, peace, and religion, the restoration of their government. The motives of public and private interest might sometimes draw from the Romans an occasional and temporary sacrifice of their claims ; and they renewed their oath of allegiance to the successor of St. Peter and Constantine, the lawful land of the church and the republic.

The union and vigour of a public council was dissolved in a lawless city ; and the Romans soon adopted a more strong and simple mode of administration. They condensed the name and authority of the senate in a single

magistrate or two colleagues ; and, as they were changed at the end of a year or of six months, the greatness of the trust was compensated by the shortness of the term. But in this transient reign, the senators of Rome indulged their avarice and ambition ; their justice was perverted by the interest of their family and faction ; and, as they punished only their enemies, they were obeyed only by their adherents. Anarchy, no longer tempered by the pastoral care of their bishop, admonished the Romans that they were incapable of governing themselves ; and they sought abroad those blessings which they were hopeless of finding at home. In the same age, and from the same motives, most of the Italian republics were prompted to embrace a measure, which, however strange it may seem, was adapted to their situation, and productive of the most salutary effects. They chose, in some foreign but friendly city, an impartial magistrate, of noble birth and unblemished character, a soldier and a statesman, recommended by the voice of fame and his country, to whom they delegated for a time the supreme administration of peace and war. The compact between the governor and the governed was sealed with oaths and subscriptions ; and the duration of his power, the measure of his stipend, the nature of their mutual obligations, were defined with scrupulous precision. They swore to obey him as their lawful superior ; he pledged his faith to unite the indifference of a stranger with the zeal of a patriot. At this choice, four or six knights and civilians, his assessors in arms and justice, attended the *Podestà*, who maintained at his own expense a decent retinue of servants and horses ; his wife, his son, his brother, who might bias the affections of the judge, were left behind ; during the exercise of his office, he was not permitted to purchase land, to contract an alliance, or even to accept an invitation in the house of a citizen ; nor could he honourably depart till he had satisfied the complaints that might be urged against his government.

## CHAPTER XII

### *RIENZI*

(A.D. 1314—1354)

[INTRODUCTION.—The Papacy reached the height of its power in the struggle with the House of Hohenstaufen in the thirteenth century. The authority of the Pope was acknowledged by almost every European sovereign, and Rome was the mistress of the Western World. But in the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Popes fell under French influence, and transferred their residence to Avignon. This led to the Great Schism of 1378, with rival Popes at Rome and Avignon. Rome now lost all her ancient prestige; she sank to the lowest pitch of degradation, and became “the rubbish-heap of politics.” In 1344, a youth of obscure birth named Rienzi conceived the plan of restoring the glories of the Imperial City, and the story of his meteoric rise and fall is narrated in the following pages.]

IN a quarter of the city which was inhabited only by mechanics and Jews, the marriage of an innkeeper and a washerwoman produced the future deliverer of Rome. From such parents Nicholas Rienzi Gabrini could inherit neither dignity nor fortune; and the gift of a liberal education, which they painfully bestowed, was the cause of his glory and untimely end. The study of history and eloquence, the writings of Cicero, Seneca, Livy, Cæsar, and Valerius Maximus, elevated above his equals and contemporaries the genius of the young plebeian; he perused with indefatigable diligence the manuscripts and marbles of antiquity; loved to dispense his knowledge in familiar language; and was often provoked to exclaim, “Where are now these Romans? their virtue, their justice, their power? why was I not born in those happy times?” When the republic addressed to the throne of Avignon an

embassy of the three orders, the spirit and eloquence of Rienzi recommended him to a place among the thirteen deputies of the commons. The orator had the honour of haranguing Pope Clement the Sixth, and the satisfaction of conversing with Petrarch, a congenial mind ; but his aspiring hopes were chilled by disgrace and poverty ; and the patriot was reduced to a single garment and the charity of the hospital. From this misery he was relieved by the sense of merit or the smile of favour ; and the employment of apostolic notary afforded him a daily stipend of five gold florins, a more honourable and extensive connection, and the right of contrasting, both in words and actions, his own integrity with the vices of the state. The eloquence of Rienzi was prompt and persuasive ; the multitude is always prone to envy and censure : he was stimulated by the loss of a brother and the impunity of the assassins ; nor was it possible to excuse or exaggerate the public calamities. The blessings of peace and justice, for which civil society has been instituted, were banished from Rome : the jealous citizens, who might have endured every personal or pecuniary injury, were most deeply wounded in the dishonour of their wives and daughters ; they were equally oppressed by the arrogance of the nobles and the corruption of the magistrates ; and the abuse of arms or of laws was the only circumstance that distinguished the lions from the dogs and serpents of the Capitol. These allegorical emblems were variously repeated in the pictures which Rienzi exhibited in the streets and churches ; and, while the spectators gazed with curious wonder, the bold and ready orator unfolded the meaning, applied the satire, inflamed their passions, and announced a distant hope of comfort and deliverance. The privileges of Rome, her eternal sovereignty over her princes and provinces, was the theme of his public and private discourse ; and a monument of servitude became in his hands a title and incentive of liberty. The decree of the senate, which granted the most ample prerogatives to the emperor Vespasian, had been

inscribed on a copper-plate still extant in the choir of the church of St. John Lateran. A numerous assembly of nobles and plebeians was invited to this political lecture, and a convenient theatre was erected for their reception. The notary appeared in a magnificent and mysterious habit, explained the inscription by a version and commentary, and descanted with eloquence and zeal on the ancient glories of the senate and people, from whom all legal authority was derived. The supine ignorance of the nobles was incapable of discerning the serious tendency of such representations : they might sometimes chastise with words and blows the plebeian reformer ; but he was often suffered in the Colonna palace to amuse the company with his threats and predictions ; and the modern Brutus was concealed under the mask of folly and the character of a buffoon. While they indulged their contempt, the restoration of the *good estate*, his favourite expression, was entertained among the people as a desirable, a possible, and at length as an approaching, event ; and, while all had the disposition to applaud, some had the courage to assist, their promised deliverer.

A prophecy, or rather a summons, affixed on the church-door of St. George, was the first public evidence of his designs ; a nocturnal assembly of an hundred citizens on Mount Aventine, the first step to their execution. After an oath of secrecy and aid, he represented to the conspirators the importance and facility of their enterprise ; that the nobles, without union or resources, were strong only in the fear of their imaginary strength ; that all power, as well as right, was in the hands of the people ; that the revenues of the apostolical chamber might relieve the public distress ; and that the pope himself would approve their victory over the common enemies of government and freedom. After securing a faithful band to protect his first declaration, he proclaimed through the city, by sound of trumpet, that on the evening of the following day all persons should assemble without arms before the church of St. Angelo, to provide

for the re-establishment of the good estate. The whole night was employed in the celebration of thirty masses of the Holy Ghost ; and in the morning, Rienzi, bare-headed, but in complete armour, issued from the church, encompassed by the hundred conspirators. The pope's vicar, the simple bishop of Orvieto, who had been persuaded to sustain a part in this singular ceremony, marched on his right hand ; and three great standards were borne aloft as the emblems of their design. In the first, the banner of *liberty*, Rome was seated on two lions, with a palm in one hand and a globe in the other ; St. Paul, with a drawn sword, was delineated in the banner of *justice* ; and in the third, St. Peter held the keys of *concord* and *peace*. Rienzi was encouraged by the presence and applause of an innumerable crowd, who understood little and hoped much ; and the procession slowly rolled forwards from the castle of St. Angelo to the Capitol. His triumph was disturbed by some secret emotion, which he laboured to suppress : he ascended without opposition, and with seeming confidence, the citadel of the republic ; harangued the people from the balcony ; and received the most flattering confirmation of his acts and laws. The nobles, as if destitute of arms and counsels, beheld in silent consternation this strange revolution ; and the moment had been prudently chosen, when the most formidable, Stephen Colonna, was absent from the city. On the first rumour he returned to his palace, affected to despise this plebeian tumult, and declared to the messenger of Rienzi that at his leisure he would cast the madman from the windows of the Capitol. The great bell instantly rang an alarm, and so rapid was the tide, so urgent was the danger, that Colonna escaped with precipitation to the suburb of St. Laurence ; from thence, after a moment's refreshment, he continued the same speedy career, till he reached in safety his castle of Palestrina, lamenting his own imprudence, which had not trampled the spark of this mighty conflagration. A general and peremptory order was issued from the Capitol to all the nobles, that

they should peaceably retire to their estates : they obeyed ; and their departure secured the tranquility of the free and obedient citizens of Rome.

But such voluntary obedience evaporates with the first transports of zeal ; and Rienzi felt the importance of justifying his usurpation by a regular form and a legal title. At his own choice, the Roman people would have displayed their attachment and authority, by lavishing on his head the names of senator or consul, of king or emperor : he preferred the ancient and modest appellation of tribune ; the protection of the commons was the essence of that sacred office ; and they were ignorant that it had never been invested with any share in the legislative or executive powers of the republic. In this character, and with the consent of the Romans, the tribune enacted the most salutary laws for the restoration and maintenance of the good estate. By the first he fulfils the wish of honesty and inexperience, that no civil suit should be protracted beyond the term of fifteen days. The danger of frequent perjury might justify the pronouncing against a false accuser the same penalty which his evidence would have inflicted ; the disorders of the times might compel the legislator to punish every homicide with death and every injury with equal retaliation. But the execution of justice was hopeless till he had previously abolished the tyranny of the nobles. It was formerly provided that none, except the supreme magistrate, should possess or command the gates, bridges, or towers, of the state ; that no private garrisons should be introduced into the towns or castles of the Roman territory ; that none should bear arms or presume to fortify their houses in the city or country ; that the barons should be responsible for the safety of the highways and the free passage of provisions ; and that the protection of malefactors and robbers should be expiated by a fine of a thousand marks of silver. But these regulations would have been impotent and nugatory, had not the licentious nobles been awed by the sword of the civil power. A



sudden alarm from the bell of the Capitol could still summon to the standard above twenty thousand volunteers ; the support of the tribune and the laws required a more regular and permanent force. In each harbour of the coast, a vessel was stationed for the assurance of commerce ; a standing militia of three hundred and sixty horse and thirteen hundred foot was levied, clothed, and paid in the thirteen quarters of the city ; and the spirit of a commonwealth may be traced in the grateful allowance of one hundred florins, or pounds, to the heirs of every soldier who lost his life in the service of his country. For the maintenance of the public defence, for the establishment of granaries, for the relief of widows, orphans, and indigent convents, Rienzi applied, without fear of sacrilege, the revenues of the apostolic chamber ; the three branches of hearth-money, the salt-duty, and the customs, were each of the annual produce of one hundred thousand florins ; and scandalous were the abuses, if in four or five months the amount of the salt-duty could be trebled by his judicious economy. After thus restoring the forces and finances of the republic, the tribune recalled the nobles from their solitary independence ; required their personal appearance in the Capitol ; and imposed an oath of allegiance to the new government and of submission to the laws of the good estate. Apprehensive for their safety, but still more apprehensive of the danger of a refusal, the princes and barons returned to their houses at Rome, in the garb of simple and peaceful citizens ; the Colonna and Ursini, the Savelli and Frangipani, were confounded before the tribunal of a plebeian, of the vile buffoon whom they had so often derided, and their disgrace was aggravated by the indignation which they vainly struggled to disguise. The same oath was successively pronounced by the several orders of society, the clergy and gentlemen, the judges and notaries, the merchants and artisans, and the gradual descent was marked by the increase of sincerity and zeal. They swore to live and die with the republic and the church,

whose interest was artfully united by the nominal association of the bishop of Orvieto, the pope's vicar, to the office of tribune. It was the boast of Rienzi that he had delivered the throne and patrimony of St. Peter from a rebellious aristocracy; and Clement the Sixth, who rejoiced in its fall, affected to believe the professions, to applaud the merits, and to confirm the title, of his trusty servant. The speech, perhaps the mind, of the tribune was inspired with a lively regard for the purity of the faith: he insinuated his claim to a supernatural mission from the Holy Ghost; enforced by an heavy forfeiture the annual duty of confession and communion; and strictly guarded the spiritual as well as temporal welfare of his faithful people.

Never, perhaps, has the energy and effect of a single mind been more remarkably felt than in the sudden, though transient, reformation of Rome by the tribune Rienzi. A den of robbers was converted to the discipline of a camp or convent: patient to hear, swift to redress, inexorable to punish, his tribunal was always accessible to the poor and stranger; nor could birth or dignity or the immunities of the church protect the offender or his accomplices. The privileged houses, the private sanctuaries in Rome, on which no officer of justice would presume to trespass, were abolished; and he applied the timber and iron of their barricades in the fortifications of the Capitol. The venerable father of the Colonna was exposed in his own palace to the double shame of being desirous, and of being unable, to protect a criminal. A mule, with a jar of oil, had been stolen near Capranica; and the lord of the Ursini family was condemned to restore the damage, and to discharge a fine of four hundred florins for his negligence in guarding the highways. Nor were the persons of the barons more inviolate than their lands or houses; and, either from accident or design, the same impartial rigour was exercised against the heads of the adverse factions. Peter Agapet Colonna, who had himself been senator of Rome, was arrested in the street for injury or debt; and justice was

appeased by the tardy execution of Martin Ursini, who, among his various acts of violence and rapine, had pillaged a shipwrecked vessel at the mouth of the Tiber. His name, the purple of two cardinals his uncles, a recent marriage, and a mortal disease, were disregarded by the inflexible tribune, who had chosen his victim. The public officers dragged him from his palace and nuptial bed: his trial was short and satisfactory; the bell of the Capitol convened the people; stripped of his mantle, on his knees, with his hands bound behind his back, he heard the sentence of death; and, after a brief confession, Ursini was led away to the gallows. After such an example, none who were conscious of guilt could hope for impunity, and the flight of the wicked, the licentious, and the idle soon purified the city and territory of Rome. In this time (says the historian) the woods began to rejoice that they were no longer infested with robbers; the oxen began to plough; the pilgrims visited the sanctuaries; the roads and inns were replenished with travellers; trade, plenty, and good faith were restored in the markets; and a purse of gold might be exposed without danger in the midst of the highway. As soon as the life and property of the subject are secure, the labours and rewards of industry spontaneously revive: Rome was still the metropolis of the Christian world; and the fame and fortunes of the tribune were diffused in every country by the strangers who had enjoyed the blessings of his government.

The deliverance of his country inspired Rienzi with a vast, and perhaps visionary, idea of uniting Italy in a great federative republic, of which Rome should be the ancient and lawful head, and the free cities and princes the members and associates. His pen was not less eloquent than his tongue; and his numerous epistles were delivered to swift and trusty messengers. On foot, with a white wand in their hand, they traversed the forests and mountains; enjoyed, in the most hostile states, the sacred security of ambassadors; and reported, in the style of flattery or

truth, that the highways along their passage were lined with kneeling multitudes, who implored Heaven for the success of their undertaking. Could passion have listened to reason, could private interest have yielded to the public welfare, the supreme tribunal and confederate union of the Italian republic might have healed their intestine discord and closed the Alps against the barbarians of the North. But the propitious season had elapsed; and, if Venice, Florence, Sienna, Perugia, and many inferior cities offered their lives and fortunes to the good estate, the tyrants of Lombardy and Tuscany must despise, or hate, the plebeian author of a free constitution. From them, however, and from every part of Italy, the tribune received the most friendly and respectful answers; they were followed by the ambassadors of the princes and republics; and in this foreign conflux, on all the occasions of pleasure or business, the low-born notary could assume the familiar or majestic courtesy of a sovereign. The most glorious circumstance of his reign was an appeal to his justice from Lewis king of Hungary, who complained that his brother, and her husband, had been perfidiously strangled by Jane queen of Naples: her guilt or innocence was pleaded in a solemn trial at Rome; but, after hearing the advocates, the tribune adjourned this weighty and invidious cause, which was soon determined by the sword of the Hungarian. Beyond the Alps, more especially at Avignon, the revolution was the theme of curiosity, wonder, and applause. Petrarch had been the private friend, perhaps the secret counsellor, of Rienzi: his writings breathe the most ardent spirit of patriotism and joy; and all respect for the pope, all gratitude for the Colonna, was lost in the superior duties of a Roman citizen. The poet-laureat of the Capitol maintains the act, applauds the hero, and mingles with some apprehension and advice the most lofty hopes of the permanent and rising greatness of the republic.

While Petrarch indulged these prophetic visions, the Roman hero was fast declining from the meridian of fame

and power ; and the people, who had gazed with astonishment on the ascending meteor, began to mark the irregularity of its course and the vicissitudes of light and obscurity. More eloquent than judicious, more enterprising than resolute, the faculties of Rienzi were not balanced by cool and commanding reason ; he magnified in a tenfold proportion the objects of hope and fear ; and prudence, which could not have erected, did not presume to fortify, his throne. In the blaze of prosperity, his virtues were insensibly tinctured with the adjacent vices : justice with cruelty, liberality with profusion, and the desire of fame with puerile and ostentatious vanity. He might have learned that the ancient tribunes, so strong and sacred in the public opinion, were not distinguished in style, habit, or appearance, from an ordinary plebeian ; and that, as often as they visited the city on foot, a single *viator*, or beadle, attended the exercise of their office. The Gracchi would have frowned or smiled, could they have read the sonorous titles and epithets of their successor, "NICHOLAS, SEVERE AND MERCIFUL ; DELIVERER OF ROME ; DEFENDER OF ITALY ; FRIEND OF MANKIND, AND OF LIBERTY, PEACE, AND JUSTICE ; TRIBUNE AUGUST" : his theatrical pageants had prepared the revolution ; but Rienzi abused, in luxury and pride, the political maxim of speaking to the eyes as well as the understanding of the multitude. From nature he had received the gift of an handsome person, till it was swelled and disfigured by intemperance ; and his propensity to laughter was corrected in the magistrate by the affectation of gravity and sternness. He was clothed, at least on public occasions, in a parti-coloured robe of velvet or satin, lined with fur and embroidered with gold ; the rod of justice which he carried in his hand was a sceptre of polished steel, crowned with a globe and cross of gold, and enclosing a small fragment of the true and holy wood. In his civil and religious processions through the city, he rode on a white steed, the symbol of royalty ; the great banner of the republic, a sun with a circle of stars, a dove with an

olive-branch, was displayed over his head ; a shower of gold and silver was scattered among the populace ; fifty guards with halberds encompassed his person ; a troop of horse preceded his march ; and their tymbals and trumpets were of massy silver.

The ambition of the honours of chivalry betrayed the meanness of his birth and degraded the importance of his office ; and the equestrian tribune was not less odious to the nobles whom he adopted than to the plebeians whom he deserted. All that yet remained of treasure or luxury or art was exhausted on that solemn day. Rienzi led the procession from the Capitol to the Lateran ; the tediousness of the way was relieved with decorations and games ; the ecclesiastical, civil, and military orders marched under their various banners ; the Roman ladies attended his wife ; and the ambassadors of Italy might loudly applaud, or secretly deride, the novelty of the pomp. In the evening, when he had reached the church and palace of Constantine, they thanked and dismissed the numerous assembly, with an invitation to the festival of the ensuing day. From the hands of a venerable knight he received the order of the Holy Ghost ; the purification of the bath was a previous ceremony ; but in no step of his life did Rienzi excite such scandal and censure as by the profane use of the porphyry vase in which Constantine (a foolish legend) had been healed of his leprosy by Pope Sylvester. With equal presumption the tribune watched or reposed within the consecrated precincts of the baptistery ; and the failure of his state-bed was interpreted as an omen of his approaching downfall. At the hour of worship he shewed himself to the returning crowds in a majestic attitude, with a robe of purple, his sword, and gilt spurs ; but the holy rites were soon interrupted by his levity and insolence. Rising from his throne, and advancing towards the congregation, he proclaimed in a loud voice, " We summon to our tribunal Pope Clement, and command him to reside in his diocese of Rome ; we also summon the sacred college of Cardinals. We again

summon the two pretenders, Charles of Bohemia and Lewis of Bavaria, who style themselves emperors ; we likewise summon all the electors of Germany, to inform us on what pretence they have usurped the unalienable right of the Roman people, the ancient and lawful sovereigns of the empire." Unsheathing his maiden sword, he thrice brandished it to the three parts of the world, and thrice repeated the extravagant declaration, " And this too is mine ! " The pope's vicar, the bishop of Orvieto, attempted to check this career of folly ; but his feeble protest was silenced by martial music ; and, instead of withdrawing from the assembly, he consented to dine with his brother tribune, at a table which had hitherto been reserved for the supreme pontiff. A banquet, such as the Cæsars had given, was prepared for the Romans. The apartments, porticoes, and courts of the Lateran were spread with innumerable tables for either sex and every condition ; a stream of wine flowed from the nostrils of Constantine's brazen horse ; no complaint, except of the scarcity of water, could be heard ; and the licentiousness of the multitude was curbed by discipline and fear. A subsequent day was appointed for the coronation of Rienzi ; seven crowns of different leaves or metals were successively placed on his head by the most eminent of the Roman clergy ; they represented the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost ; and he still professed to imitate the example of the ancient tribunes. These extraordinary spectacles might deceive or flatter the people ; and their own vanity was gratified in the vanity of their leader. But in his private life he soon deviated from the strict rule of frugality and abstinence ; and the plebeians, who were awed by the splendour of the nobles, were provoked by the luxury of their equal. His wife, his son, his uncle (a barber in name and profession), exposed the contrast of vulgar manners and princely expense ; and, without acquiring the majesty, Rienzi degenerated into the vices, of a king.

A simple citizen describes with pity, or perhaps with pleasure, the humiliation of the barons of Rome. " Bare-

headed, their hands crossed on their breast, they stood with downcast looks in the presence of the tribune ; and they trembled, good God, how they trembled ! ” As long as the yoke of Rienzi was that of justice and their country, their conscience forced them to esteem the man whom pride and interest provoked them to hate : his extravagant conduct soon fortified their hatred by contempt ; and they conceived the hope of subverting a power which was no longer so deeply rooted in the public confidence. The old animosity of the Colonna and Ursini was suspended for a moment by their common disgrace : they associated their wishes, and perhaps their designs ; an assassin was seized and tortured ; he accused the nobles ; and, as soon as Rienzi deserved the fate, he adopted the suspicions and maxims, of a tyrant. On the same day, under various pretences, he invited to the Capitol his principal enemies, among whom were five members of the Ursini, and three of the Colonna, name. But, instead of a council or a banquet, they found themselves prisoners under the sword of despotism or justice ; and the consciousness of innocence or guilt might inspire them with equal apprehensions of danger. At the sound of the great bell the people assembled : they were arraigned for a conspiracy against the tribune’s life ; and, though some might sympathize in their distress, not a hand nor a voice was raised to rescue the first of the nobility from their impending doom. Their apparent boldness was prompted by despair ; they passed in separate chambers a sleepless and painful night ; and the venerable hero, Stephen Colonna, striking against the door of his prison, repeatedly urged his guards to deliver him by a speedy death from such ignominious servitude. In the morning they understood their sentence from the visit of a confessor and the tolling of the bell. The great hall of the Capitol had been decorated for the bloody scene with red and white hangings ; the countenance of the tribune was dark and severe ; the swords of the executioners were unsheathed : and the barons were interrupted in their



dying speeches by the sound of trumpets. But in this decisive moment Rienzi was not less anxious or apprehensive than his captives: he dreaded the splendour of their names, their surviving kinsmen, the inconstancy of the people, the reproaches of the world; and, after rashly offering a mortal injury, he vainly presumed that, if he could forgive, he might himself be forgiven. His elaborate oration was that of a Christian and a suppliant; and, as the humble minister of the commons, he entreated his masters to pardon these noble criminals, for whose repentance and future service he pledged his faith and authority. "If you are spared," said the tribune, "by the mercy of the Romans, will you not promise to support the good estate with your lives and fortunes?" Astonished by this marvellous clemency, the barons bowed their heads; and, while they devoutly repeated the oath of allegiance, might whisper a secret, and more sincere, assurance of revenge. A priest, in the name of the people, pronounced their absolution. They received the communion with the tribune, assisted at the banquet, followed the procession; and, after every spiritual and temporal sign of reconciliation, were dismissed in safety to their respective homes, with the new honours and titles of generals, consuls, and patricians.

During some weeks they were checked by the memory of their danger rather than of their deliverance, till the more powerful of the Ursini, escaping with the Colonna from the city, erected at Marino the standard of rebellion. The fortifications of the castle were instantly restored; the vassals attended their lord; the outlaws armed against the magistrate; the flocks and herds, the harvests and vineyards, from Marino to the gates of Rome, were swept away or destroyed; and the people arraigned Rienzi as the author of the calamities which his government had taught them to forget. In the camp Rienzi appeared to less advantage than in the rostrum; and he neglected the progress of the rebel barons till their numbers were strong and their

castles impregnable. From the pages of Livy he had not imbibed the art, or even the courage, of a general. An army of twenty thousand Romans returned, without honour or effect, from the attack of Marino; and his vengeance was amused by painting his enemies, their heads downwards, and drowning two dogs (at least they should have been bears) as the representatives of the Ursini. The belief of his incapacity encouraged their operations: they were invited by their secret adherents; and the barons attempted, with four thousand foot and sixteen hundred horse, to enter Rome by force or surprise. The city was prepared for their reception; the alarm bell rung all night; the gates were strictly guarded, or insolently open; and after some hesitation they sounded a retreat. The two first divisions had passed along the walls, but the prospect of a free entrance tempted the headstrong valour of the nobles in the rear; and, after a successful skirmish, they were overthrown and massacred without quarter by the crowds of the Roman people. Stephen Colonna the younger, the noble spirit to whom Petrarch ascribed the restoration of Italy, was preceded or accompanied in death by his son John, a gallant youth, by his brother Peter, who might regret the ease and honours of the church, by a nephew of legitimate birth, and by two bastards of the Colonna race; and the number of seven, the seven crowns, as Rienzi styled them, of the Holy Ghost, was completed by the agony of the deplorable parent, of the veteran chief, who had survived the hope and fortune of his house. The vision and prophecies of St. Martin and Pope Boniface had been used by the tribune to animate his troops; he displayed, at least in the pursuit, the spirit of an hero; but he forgot the maxims of the ancient Romans, who abhorred the triumphs of civil war. The conqueror ascended the Capitol; deposited his crown and sceptre on the altar; and boasted with some truth that he had cut off an ear which neither pope nor emperor had been able to amputate. His base and implacable revenge denied the honours of

burial ; and the bodies of the Colonna, which he threatened to expose with those of the vilest malefactors, were secretly interred by the holy virgins of their name and family. The people sympathized in their grief, repented of their own fury, and detested the indecent joy of Rienzi, who visited the spot where these illustrious victims had fallen. It was on that fatal spot that he conferred on his son the honour of knighthood ; and the ceremony was accomplished by a slight blow from each of the horsemen of the guard, and by a ridiculous and inhuman ablution from a pool of water, which was yet polluted with patrician blood.

A short delay would have saved the Colonna, the delay of a single month, which elapsed between the triumph and the exile of Rienzi. In the pride of victory, he forfeited what yet remained of his civil virtues, without acquiring the fame of military prowess. A free and vigorous opposition was formed in the city ; and, when the tribune proposed in the public council to impose a new tax and to regulate the government of Perugia, thirty-nine members voted against his measures ; repelled the injurious charge of treachery and corruption ; and urged him to prove, by their forcible exclusion, that, if the populace adhered to his cause, it was already disclaimed by the most respectable citizens. The pope and the sacred college had never been dazzled by his specious professions ; they were justly offended by the insolence of his conduct ; a cardinal legate was sent to Italy, and, after some fruitless treaty and two personal interviews, he fulminated a bull of excommunication, in which the tribune is degraded from his office and branded with the guilt of rebellion, sacrilege, and heresy. The surviving barons of Rome were now humbled to a sense of allegiance ; their interest and revenge engaged them in the service of the church ; but, as the fate of the Colonna was before their eyes, they abandoned to a private adventurer the peril and glory of the revolution. John Pepin, count of Minorbino, in the kingdom of Naples, had been condemned for his crimes, or his riches, to perpetual im-

prisonment ; and Petrarch, by soliciting his release, indirectly contributed to the ruin of his friend. At the head of one hundred and fifty soldiers, the count of Minorbilo introduced himself into Rome ; barricaded the quarter of the Colonna ; and found the enterprise as easy as it had seemed impossible. From the first alarm, the bell of the Capitol incessantly tolled ; but, instead of repairing to the well-known sound, the people was silent and inactive ; and the pusillanimous Rienzi, deploring their ingratitude with sighs and tears, abdicated the government and palace of the republic.

Without drawing his sword, Count Pepin restored the aristocracy and the church ; three senators were chosen, and the legate, assuming the first rank, accepted his two colleagues from the rival families of Colonna and Ursini. The acts of the tribune were abolished, his head was proscribed ; yet such was the terror of his name that the barons hesitated three days before they would trust themselves in the city, and Rienzi was left above a month in the castle of St. Angelo, from whence he peaceably withdrew, after labouring, without effect, to revive the affection and courage of the Romans. The vision of freedom and empire had vanished ; their fallen spirit would have acquiesced in servitude, had it been smoothed by tranquility and order ; and it was scarcely observed that the new senators derived their authority from the Apostolic See ; that four cardinals were appointed to reform, with dictatorial power, the state of the republic. Rome was again agitated by the bloody feuds of the barons, who detested each other and despised the commons ; their hostile fortresses, both in town and country, again rose and were again demolished ; and the peaceful citizens, a flock of sheep, were devoured, says the Florentine historian, by these rapacious wolves. But, when their pride and avarice had exhausted the patience of the Romans, a confraternity of the Virgin Mary protected or avenged the republic ; the bell of the Capitol was again tolled, the nobles in arms trembled in the presence

of an unarmed multitude ; and of the two senators, Colonna escaped from the window of the palace, and Ursini was stoned at the foot of the altar. The dangerous office of tribune was successively occupied by two plebeians, Cerroni and Baroncelli. The mildness of Cerroni was unequal to the times ; and, after a faint struggle, he retired with a fair reputation and a decent fortune to the comforts of rural life. Devoid of eloquence or genius, Baroncelli was distinguished by a resolute spirit : he spoke the language of a patriot, and trod in the footsteps of tyrants ; his suspicion was a sentence of death, and his own death was the reward of his cruelties. Amidst the public misfortunes, the faults of Rienzi were forgotten ; and the Romans sighed for the peace and prosperity of the good estate.

After an exile of seven years, the first deliverer was again restored to his country. In the disguise of a monk or a pilgrim, he escaped from the castle of St. Angelo, implored the friendship of the king of Hungary at Naples, tempted the ambition of every bold adventurer, mingled at Rome with the pilgrims of the jubilee, lay concealed among the hermits of the Apennine, and wandered through the cities of Italy, Germany, and Bohemia. His person was invisible, his name was yet formidable ; and the anxiety of the court of Avignon supposes, and even magnifies, his personal merit. The emperor Charles the Fourth gave audience to a stranger, who frankly revealed himself as the tribune of the republic and astonished an assembly of ambassadors and princes by the eloquence of a patriot and the visions of a prophet, the downfall of tyranny and the kingdom of the Holy Ghost. Whatever had been his hopes, Rienzi found himself a captive ; but he supported a character of independence and dignity, and obeyed, as his own choice, the irresistible summons of the supreme pontiff. The zeal of Petrarch, which had been cooled by the unworthy conduct, was rekindled by the sufferings and the presence, of his friend ; and he boldly complains of the times in which the saviour of Rome was delivered by her emperor

into the hands of her bishop. Rienzi was transported slowly, but in safe custody, from Prague to Avignon ; his entrance into the city was that of a malefactor ; in his prison he was chained by the leg ; and four cardinals were named to inquire into the crimes of heresy and rebellion. but his trial and condemnation would have involved some questions which it was more prudent to leave under the veil of mystery : the temporal supremacy of the popes ; the duty of residence ; the civil and ecclesiastical privileges of the clergy and people of Rome. The reigning pontiff well deserved the appellation of *Clement* ; the strange vicissitudes and magnanimous spirit of the captive excited his pity and esteem ; and Petrarch believes that he respected in the hero the name and sacred character of a poet. Rienzi was indulged with an easy confinement and the use of books ; and in the assiduous study of Livy and the Bible he sought the cause and the consolation of his misfortunes.

The succeeding pontificate of Innocent the Sixth opened a new prospect of his deliverance and restoration ; and the court of Avignon was persuaded that the successful rebel could alone appease and reform the anarchy of the metropolis. After a solemn profession of fidelity, the Roman tribune was sent into Italy with the title of senator ; but the death of Baroncelli appeared to supersede the use of his mission ; and the legate, Cardinal Albernoz, a consummate statesman, allowed him, with reluctance, and without aid, to undertake the perilous experiment. His first reception was equal to his wishes : the day of his entrance was a public festival, and his eloquence and authority revived the laws of the good estate. But this momentary sunshine was soon clouded by his own vices and those of the people : in the Capitol, he might often regret the prison of Avignon ; and, after a second administration of four months, Rienzi was massacred in a tumult which had been fomented by the Roman barons. In the society of the Germans and Bonemians, he is said to have contracted the habits of

intemperance and cruelty ; adversity had chilled his enthusiasm, without fortifying his reason or virtue ; and that youthful hope, that lively assurance, which is the pledge of success, was now succeeded by the cold impotence of distrust and despair. The tribune had reigned with absolute dominion, by the choice and in the hearts of the Romans ; the senator was the servile minister of a foreign court ; and, while he was suspected by the people, he was abandoned by the prince. The legate Alborno, who seemed desirous of his ruin, inflexibly refused all supplies of men and money ; a faithful subject could no longer presume to touch the revenues of the apostolical chamber ; and the first idea of a tax was the signal of clamour and sedition. Even his justice was tainted with the guilt or reproach of selfish cruelty ; the most virtuous citizen of Rome was sacrificed to his jealousy ; and in the execution of a public robber, from whose purse he had been assisted, the magistrate too much forgot, or too much remembered, the obligations of the debtor. A civil war exhausted his treasures, and the patience of the city ; the Colonna maintained their hostile station at Palestrina ; and his mercenaries soon despised a leader whose ignorance and fear were envious of all subordinate merit. In the death as in the life of Rienzi, the hero and the coward were strangely mingled. When the Capitol was invested by a furious multitude, when he was basely deserted by his civil and military servant, the intrepid senator, waving the banner of liberty, presented himself on the balcony, addressed his eloquence to the various passions of the Romans, and laboured to persuade them that in the same cause himself and the republic must either stand or fall. His oration was interrupted by a volley of imprecations and stones ; and, after an arrow had transpierced his hand, he sunk into abject despair, and fled weeping to the inner chambers, from whence he was let down by a sheet before the windows of the prison. Destitute of aid or hope, he was besieged till the evening : the doors of the Capitol were destroyed with

axes and fire ; and, while the senator attempted to escape in a plebeian habit, he was discovered and dragged to the platform of the palace, the fatal scene of his judgments and executions. A whole hour, without voice or motion, he stood amidst the multitude, half naked and half dead ; their rage was hushed into curiosity and wonder ; the last feelings of reverence and compassion yet struggled in his favour ; and they might have prevailed, if a bold assassin had not plunged a dagger in his breast. He fell senseless with the first stroke ; the impotent revenge of his enemies inflicted a thousand wounds ; and the senator's body was abandoned to the dogs, to the Jews, and to the flames. Posterity will compare the virtues and the failings of this extraordinary man ; but in a long period of anarchy and servitude the name of Rienzi has often been celebrated as the deliverer of his country and the last of the Roman patriots.



## CHAPTER XIII

### *THE DAWN OF THE RENAISSANCE IN ITALY*

(c. 1453 A.D.)

[INTRODUCTION.—The beginnings of the Renaissance may be traced in Italy as early as the thirteenth century; indeed, the torch of learning had never been totally extinguished in that land, and it only needed a propitious gale to fan the embers to flame. This was provided by the Greek scholars from the Byzantine Empire, who started to teach Greek in Italy about 1400 B.C. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, they came in greater numbers, bringing with them stores of priceless manuscripts. At the same time, a parallel movement, the development of the vernacular as a vehicle of literature, had been progressing under Petrarch, Dante and the Troubadours. The Medicis of Florence and Popes Nicholas V and Julius II patronized the movement. Its characteristic note is *Humanism*, the revolt of the individual against the thrall of theological despotism, which was fostered by the rediscovery of classical literature, and this was encouraged by the eclipse of the Papacy consequent upon the removal to Avignon and the Great Schism.]

THE most learned Italians of the fifteenth century have confessed and applauded the restoration of Greek literature, after a long oblivion of many hundred years. Yet in that country, and beyond the Alps, some names are quoted: some profound scholars, who, in the darker ages, were honourably distinguished by their knowledge of the Greek tongue; and national vanity has been loud in the praise of such rare examples of erudition. Without scrutinising the merit of individuals, truth must observe that their science is without a cause and without an effect; that it was easy for them to satisfy themselves and their more ignorant contemporaries; and that the idiom, which they

had so marvellously acquired, was transcribed in few manuscripts, and was not taught in any university of the West. In a corner of Italy it faintly existed as the popular, or at least as the ecclesiastical, dialect. The first impression of the Doric and Ionic colonies has never been completely erased; the Calabrian churches were long attached to the throne of Constantinople; and the monks of St. Basil pursued their studies in Mount Athos and the schools of the East. Calabria was the native country of Barlaam, who has already appeared as a sectary and an ambassador; and Barlaam was the first who revived, beyond the Alps, the memory, or at least the writings, of Homer. He is described, by Petrarch and Boccace, as a man of a diminutive stature, though truly great in the measure of learning and genius; of a piercing discernment, though of a slow and painful elocution. For many ages (as they affirm) Greece had not produced his equal in the knowledge of history, grammar, and philosophy; and his merit was celebrated in the attestations of the princes and doctors of Constantinople. One of these attestations is still extant; and the emperor Cantacuzene, the protector of his adversaries, is forced to allow that Euclid, Aristotle, and Plato were familiar to that profound and subtle logician. In the court of Avignon, he formed an intimate connexion with Petrarch, the first of the Latin scholars; and the desire of mutual instruction was the principle of their literary commerce. The Tuscan applied himself with eager curiosity and assiduous diligence to the study of the Greek language; and, in a laborious struggle with the dryness and difficulty of the first rudiments, he began to reach the sense, and to feel the spirit, of poets and philosophers whose minds were congenial to his own. But he was soon deprived of the society and lessons of this useful assistant. Barlaam relinquished his fruitless embassy; and, on his return to Greece, he rashly provoked the swarms of fanatic monks by attempting to substitute the light of reason to that of their navel. After a separation of three years, the two friends

again met in the court of Naples ; but the generous pupil renounced the fairest occasion of improvement ; and by his recommendation Barlaam was finally settled in a small bishopric of his native Calabria. The manifold avocations of Petrarch, love and friendship, his various correspondence and frequent journeys, the Roman laurel, and his elaborate compositions in prose and verse, in Latin and Italian, diverted him from a foreign idiom ; and, as he advanced in life, the attainment of the Greek language was the object of his wishes rather than of his hopes. When he was about fifty years of age, a Byzantine ambassador, his friend, and a master of both tongues, presented him with a copy of Homer ; and the answer of Petrarch is at once expressive of his eloquence, gratitude, and regret. After celebrating the generosity of the donor, and the value of a gift more precious in his estimation than gold or rubies, he thus proceeds : “ Your present of the genuine and original text of the divine poet, the fountain of all invention, is worthy of yourself and of me ; you have fulfilled your promise and satisfied my desires. Yet your liberality is still imperfect : with Homer you should have given me yourself : a guide, who could lead me into the fields of light, and disclose to my wondering eyes the specious miracles of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. But, alas ! Homer is dumb, or I am deaf ; nor is it in my power to enjoy the beauty which I possess. I have seated him by the side of Plato, the prince of poets near the prince of philosophers ; and I glory in the sight of my illustrious guests. Of their immortal writings, whatever had been translated into the Latin idiom, I had already acquired ; but, if there be no profit, there is some pleasure in beholding these venerable Greeks in their proper and national habit. I am delighted with the aspect of Homer ; and, as often as I embrace the silent volume, I exclaim, with a sigh, Illustrious bard ! with what pleasure should I listen to thy song, if my sense of hearing were not obstructed and lost by the death of one friend, and in the much lamented absence of another ! Nor do I, yet

despair ; and the example of Cato suggests some comfort and hope, since it was in the last period of age that he attained the knowledge of the Greek letters."

The prize which eluded the efforts of Petrarch was obtained by the fortune and industry of his friend Boccace, the father of the Tuscan prose. That popular writer, who derives his reputation from the Decameron, an hundred novels of pleasantry and love, may aspire to the more serious praise of restoring in Italy the study of the Greek language. In the year one thousand three hundred and sixty, a disciple of Barlaam, whose name was Leo or Leontius Pilatus, was detained in his way to Avignon by the advice and hospitality of Boccace, who lodged the stranger in his house, prevailed on the republic of Florence to allow him an annual stipend, and devoted his leisure to the first Greek professor who taught the language in the Western countries of Europe. The appearance of Leo might disgust the most eager disciple. He was clothed in the mantle of a philosopher, or a mendicant ; his countenance was hideous ; his face was overshadowed with black hair ; his beard long and uncombed ; his deportment rustic ; his temper gloomy and inconstant ; nor could he grace his discourse with the ornaments or even the perspicuity of Latin elocution. But his mind was stored with a treasure of Greek learning ; history and fable, philosophy and grammar, were alike at his command ; and he read the poems of Homer in the schools of Florence. It was from his explanation that Boccace composed and transcribed a literal prose version of the Iliad and Odyssey, which satisfied the thirst of his friend Petrarch, and which perhaps, in the succeeding century, was clandestinely used by Laurentius Valla, the Latin interpreter. It was from his narratives that the same Boccace collected the materials for his treatise on the genealogy of the heathen gods ; a work, in that age, of stupendous erudition, and which he ostentatiously sprinkled with Greek characters and passages, to excite the wonder and applause of his more ignorant readers. The first steps

of learning are slow and laborious : no more than ten votaries of Homer could be enumerated in all Italy ; and neither Rome nor Venice nor Naples could add a single name to this studious catalogue. But their numbers would have multiplied, their progress would have been accelerated, if the inconstant Leo, at the end of three years, had not relinquished an honourable and beneficial station. In his passage, Petrarch entertained him at Padua a short time : he enjoyed the scholar, but was justly offended with the gloomy and unsocial temper of the man. Discontented with the world and with himself, Leo depreciated his present enjoyments, while absent persons and objects were dear to his imagination. In Italy, he was a Thessalian, in Greece, a native of Calabria ; in the company of the Latins, he disdained their language, religion, and manner : no sooner was he landed at Constantinople, than he again sighed for the wealth of Venice and the elegance of Florence. His Italian friends were deaf to his importunity ; he depended on their curiosity and indulgence, and embarked on a second voyage ; but, on his entrance into the Adriatic, the ship was assailed by a tempest, and the unfortunate teacher, who, like Ulysses, had fastened himself to the mast, was struck dead by a flash of lightning. The humane Petrarch dropped a tear on his disaster ; but he was most anxious to learn whether some copy of Euripides or Sophocles might not be saved from the hands of the mariners.

But the faint rudiments of Greek learning, which Petrarch had encouraged and Boccace had planted, soon withered and expired. The succeeding generation was content for a while with the improvement of Latin eloquence ; nor was it before the end of the fourteenth century that a new and perpetual flame was rekindled in Italy. Previous to his own journey, the emperor Manuel dispatched his envoys and orators to implore the compassion of the Western princes. Of these envoys, the most conspicuous or the most learned was Manuel Chrysoloras, of noble birth, and whose Roman ancestors are supposed to have migrated

with the great Constantine. After visiting the courts of France and England, where he obtained some contributions and more promises, the envoy was invited to assume the office of a professor ; and Florence had again the honour of this second invitation. By his knowledge, not only of the Greek but of the Latin tongue, Chrysoloras deserved the stipend and surpassed the expectation of the republic ; his school was frequented by a crowd of disciples of every rank and age ; and one of these, in a general history, has described his motives and his success. " At that time," says Leonard Aretin, " I was a student of the civil law ; but my soul was inflamed with the love of letters ; and I bestowed some application on the sciences of logic and rhetoric. On the arrival of Manuel, I hesitated whether I should desert my legal studies or relinquish this golden opportunity ; and thus, in the ardour of youth, I communed with my own mind—Wilt thou be wanting to thyself and thy fortune ? Wilt thou refuse to be introduced to a familiar converse with Homer, Plato, and Demosthenes ? with those poets, philosophers, and orators, of whom such wonders are related, and who are celebrated by every age as the great masters of human science ? Of professors and scholars in civil law, a sufficient supply will always be found in our universities ; but a teacher, and such a teacher, of the Greek language, if he once be suffered to escape, may never afterwards be retrieved. Convinced by these reasons, I gave myself to Chrysoloras ; and so strong was my passion that the lessons which I had imbibed in the day were the constant subject of my nightly dreams." At the same time and place the Latin classics were explained by John of Ravenna, the domestic pupil of Petrarch ; the Italians, who illustrated their age and country, were formed in this double school ; and Florence became the fruitful seminary of Greek and Roman erudition. The presence of the emperor recalled Chrysoloras from the college to the court, but he afterwards taught at Pavia and Rome with equal industry and applause. The remainder of his life,

about fifteen years, was divided between Italy and Constantinople, between embassies and lessons. In the noble Office of enlightening a foreign nation, the grammarian was not unmindful of a more sacred duty to his prince and country; and Emanuel Chrysoloras died at Constance on a public mission from the emperor to the council.

After his example, the restoration of the Greek letters in Italy was prosecuted by a series of emigrants, who were destitute of fortune, and endowed with learning, or at least with language. From the terror or oppression of the Turkish arms the natives of Thessalonica and Constantinople escaped to a land of freedom, curiosity, and wealth. The synod introduced into Florence the lights of the Greek church and the oracles of the Platonic philosophy; and the fugitives who adhered to the union had the double merit of renouncing their country not only for the Christian but for the Catholic cause. A patriot who sacrifices his party and conscience to the allurements of favour may be possessed, however, of the private and social virtues; he no longer hears the reproachful epithets of slave and apostate; and the consideration which he acquires among his new associates will restore in his own eyes the dignity of his character. The prudent conformity of Bessarion was rewarded with the Roman purple; he fixed his residence in Italy; and the Greek cardinal, the titular patriarch of Constantinople, was respected as the chief and protector of his nation. His abilities were exercised in the legations of Bologna, Venice, Germany, and France; and his election to the chair of St. Peter floated for a moment on the uncertain breath of a conclave. His ecclesiastical honours diffused a splendour and pre-eminence over his literary merit and service: his palace was a school; as often as the cardinal visited the Vatican, he was attended by a learned train of both nations; of men applauded by themselves and the public; and whose writings, now overspread with dust, were popular and useful in their own times. I shall not attempt to enumerate the restorers of Grecian litera-

ture in the fifteenth century ; and it may be sufficient to mention with gratitude the names of Theodore Gaza, of George of Trebizond, of John Argyropulus, and Demetrius Chalcondyles, who taught their native language in the schools of Florence and Rome. Their labours were not inferior to those of Bessarion, whose purple they revered, and whose fortune was the secret object of their envy. But the lives of these grammarians were humble and obscure ; they had declined the lucrative paths of the church ; their dress and manners secluded them from the commerce of the world ; and, since they were confined to the merit, they might be content with the rewards, of learning. From this character Janus Lascaris will deserve an exception. His eloquence, politeness, and Imperial descent recommended him to the French monarchs ; and in the same cities he was alternately employed to teach and to negotiate. Duty and interest prompted them to cultivate the study of the Latin language ; and the most successful attained the faculty of writing and speaking with fluency and elegance in a foreign idiom. But they ever retained the inveterate vanity of their country : their praise, or at least their esteem, was reserved for the national writers, to whom they owed their fame and subsistence ; and they sometimes betrayed their contempt in licentious criticism or satire on Virgil's poetry and the oratory of Tully. The superiority of these masters arose from the familiar use of a living language ; and their first disciples were incapable of discerning how far they had degenerated from the knowledge, and even the practice, of their ancestors. A vicious pronunciation, which they introduced, was banished from the schools by the reason of the succeeding age. Of the power of the Greek accents they were ignorant ; and those musical notes, which, from an Attic tongue and to an Attic ear, must have been the secret soul of harmony, were to their eyes, as to our own, no more than mute or unmeaning marks, in prose superfluous and troublesome in verse. The art of grammar they truly possessed ; the



valuable fragments of Apollonius and Herodian were transfused into their lessons ; and their treatises of syntax and etymology, though devoid of philosophic spirit, are still useful to the Greek student. In the shipwreck of the Byzantine libraries, each fugitive seized a fragment of treasure, a copy of some author, who, without his industry might have perished ; the transcripts were multiplied by an assiduous, and sometimes an elegant, pen ; and the text was corrected and explained by their own comments or those of the elder scholiasts. The sense, though not the spirit, of the Greek classics was interpreted to the Latin world ; the beauties of style evaporate in a version ; but the judgment of Theodore Gaza selected the more solid works of Aristotle and Theophrastus, and their natural histories of animals and plants opened a rich fund of genuine and experimental science.

Yet the fleeting shadows of metaphysics were pursued with more curiosity and ardour. After a long oblivion, Plato was revived in Italy by a venerable Greek, who taught in the house of Cosmo of Medicis. While the synod of Florence was involved in theological debate, some beneficial consequences might flow from the study of his elegant philosophy ; his style is the purest standard of the Attic dialect ; and his sublime thoughts are sometimes adapted to familiar conversation, and sometimes adorned with the richest colours of poetry and eloquence. The dialogues of Plato are a dramatic picture of the life and death of a sage ; and, as often as he descends from the clouds, his moral system inculcates the love of truth, of our country, and of mankind. The precept and example of Socrates recommended a modest doubt and liberal inquiry ; and, if the Platonists, with blind devotion, adored the visions and errors of their divine master, their enthusiasm might correct the dry dogmatic method of the Peripatetic school. So equal, yet so opposite, are the merits of Plato and Aristotle that they may be balanced in endless controversy ; but some spark of freedom may be produced by the collision

of adverse servitude. The modern Greeks were divided between the two sects ; with more fury than skill they fought under the banner of their leaders ; and the field of battle was removed in their flight from Constantinople to Rome. But this philosophic debate soon degenerated into an angry and personal quarrel of grammarians ; and Bessarion, though an advocate for Plato, protected the national honour, by interposing the advice and authority of a mediator. In the gardens of the Medici, the academical doctrine was enjoyed by the polite and learned ; but their philosophic society was quickly dissolved ; and, if the writings of the Attic sage were perused in the closet, the more powerful Stagirite continued to reign the oracle of the church and school.

I have fairly represented the literary merits of the Greeks ; yet it must be confessed that they were seconded and surpassed by the ardour of the Latins. Italy was divided into many independent states ; and at that time it was the ambition of princes and republics to vie with each other in the encouragement and reward of literature. The fame of Nicholas the Fifth has not been adequate to his merits. From a plebeian origin he raised himself by his virtue and learning : the character of the man prevailed over the interest of the pope ; and he sharpened those weapons which were soon pointed against the Roman church. He had been the friend of the most eminent scholars of the age ; he became their patron ; and such was the humility of his manners that the change was scarcely discernable either to them or to himself. If he pressed the acceptance of a liberal gift, it was not as the measure of desert, but as the proof of benevolence ; and, when modest merit declined his bounty, " Accept it," would he say with a consciousness of his own worth ; " you will not always have a Nicholas among ye." The influence of the holy see pervaded Christendom ; and he exerted that influence in the search, not of benefices, but of books. From the ruins of the Byzantine libraries, from the darkest monas-

teries of Germany and Britain, he collected the dusty manuscripts of the writers of antiquity ; and, wherever the original could not be removed, a faithful copy was transcribed and transmitted for his use. The Vatican, the old repository for bulls and legends, for superstition and forgery, was daily replenished with more precious furniture ; and such was the industry of Nicholas that in a reign of eight years he formed a library of five thousand volumes. To his munificence the Latin world was indebted for the versions of Xenophon, Diodorus, Polybius, Thucydides, Herodotus, and Appian ; of Strabo's Geography, of the Iliad, of the most valuable works of Plato and Aristotle, of Ptolemy and Theophrastus, and of the fathers of the Greek church. The example of the Roman pontiff was preceded or imitated by a Florentine merchant, who governed the republic without arms and without a title. Cosmo of Medicis was a father of a line of princes, whose name and age are almost synonymous with the restoration of learning ; his credit was ennobled into fame ; his riches were dedicated to the service of mankind ; he corresponded at once with Cairo and London ; and a cargo of Indian spices and Greek books was often imported in the same vessel. The genius and education of his grandson Lorenzo rendered him, not only a patron, but a judge and candidate, in the literary race. In his palace, distress was entitled to relief, and merit to reward ; his leisure-hours were delightfully spent in the Platonic academy ; he encouraged the emulation of Demetrius Chalcondyles and Angelo Politian ; and his active missionary, Janus Lascaris, returned from the East with a treasure of two hundred manuscripts, fourscore of which were as yet unknown in the libraries of Europe. The rest of Italy was animated by a similar spirit, and the progress of the nation repaid the liberality of her princes. The Latins held the exclusive property of their own literature ; and these disciples of Greece were soon capable of transmitting and improving the lessons which they had imbibed. After a short succes-

sion of foreign teachers, the tide of emigration subsided ; but the language of Constantinople was spread beyond the Alps ; and the natives of France, Germany, and England imparted to their country the sacred fire which they had kindled in the schools of Florence and Rome. In the productions of the mind, as in those of the soil, the gifts of nature are excelled by industry and skill ; the Greek authors, forgotten on the banks of the Ilissus, have been illustrated on those of the Elbe and the Thames ; and Bessarion or Gaza might have envied the superior science of the barbarians : the accuracy of Budæus, the taste of Erasmus, the copiousness of Stephens, the erudition of Scaliger, the discernment of Reiske or of Bentley. On the side of the Latins, the discovery of printing was a casual advantage ; but this useful art has been applied by Aldus, and his innumerable successors, to perpetuate and multiply the works of antiquity. A single manuscript imported from Greece is revived in ten thousand copies ; and each copy is fairer than the original. In this form, Homer and Plato would peruse with more satisfaction their own writings ; and their scholiasts must resign the prize to the labours of our western editors.

Before the revival of classic literature, the barbarians in Europe were immersed in ignorance ; and their vulgar tongues were marked with the rudeness and poverty of their manners. The students of the more perfect idioms of Rome and Greece were introduced to a new world of light and science ; to the society of the free and polished nations of antiquity ; and to a familiar converse with those immortal men who spoke the sublime language of eloquence and reason. Such an intercourse must tend to refine the taste, and to elevate the genius, of the moderns ; and yet, from the first experiments, it might appear that the study of the ancients had given fetters, rather than wings, to the human mind. However laudable, the spirit of imitation is of a servile cast ; and the first disciples of the Greeks and Romans were a colony of strangers in the midst of their

age and country. The minute and laborious diligence which explored the antiquities of remote times might have improved or adorned the present state of society: the critic and metaphysician were the slaves of Aristotle; the poets, historians, and orators were proud to repeat the thoughts and words of the Augustan age; the works of nature were observed with the eyes of Pliny and Theophrastus; and some pagan votaries professed a secret devotion to the gods of Homer and Plato. The Italians were oppressed by the strength and number of their ancient auxiliaries: the century after the deaths of Petrarch and Boccace was filled with a crowd of Latin imitators, who decently repose on our shelves; but in that æra of learning it will not be easy to discern a real discovery of science, a work of invention or eloquence, in the popular language of the country. But, as soon as it had been deeply saturated with the celestial dew, the soil was quickened into vegetation and life; the modern idioms were refined; the classics of Athens and Rome inspired a pure taste and a generous emulation; and in Italy, as afterwards in France and England, the pleasing reign of poetry and fiction was succeeded by the light of speculative and experimental philosophy. Genius may anticipate the season of maturity; but in the education of a people, as in that of an individual, memory must be exercised, before the powers of reason and fancy can be expanded; nor may the artist hope to equal or surpass, till he has learned to imitate, the works of his predecessors.

*END OF BOOK I*









